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A

CALL TO CHRISTIANS:

SHOWING THE NECESSITY OF

A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE.

BY WILLAM LAW, A.M.

REVISED AND ABRIDGED

BY HOWARD MALCOM, D.D.

WITH A NEW MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

The reader is assured that no sentiments are expunged from this edition of the "Serious Call" but such as are repugnant to the views of the great bulk of Christians, or are redundant. In no case has any sentiment of the Editor been foisted into the book. It was not deemed proper to make great alterations in the diction, though in many respects this has necessarily been done to meet the present standard of taste.

In the original work, though the author was an Episcopal minister, some of the prominent errors not only of Jacob Behmen, and Madame Guion, but of the Romish Church, constantly occur, beside many peculiarities which have never been adopted by any body of Christians, or perhaps by any other individual. The intrinsic excellence of a large part of the book has, however, notwithstanding these blemishes, kept it always in demand; *eighteen editions* having already been printed in this country, beside a still larger number in England. It seemed therefore to the Editor, and to many of his friends, highly important that an expurgated edition should be prepared. This has now been done, with all the care and pains of which the Editor is capable.

It must be remembered by the reader, that this book is addressed to *professed Christians*. Hence it formed no part of the author's plan to exhibit the satisfaction of Christ, or the mode of conversion. These topics he

has treated elsewhere, but could not be introduced into this treatise without impairing its unity, and thus diminishing its effect. Attention to this consideration will prevent any one from mistaking the means of our gradual and perfect sanctification, as here inculcated, for a process of justification from the guilt of sins that are past, or any part of our title to the inheritance of the saints.

If any should still be of opinion that the distinguishing doctrines of grace are too little brought forward, it may be lamented as a defect, indeed, but cannot justly be made an objection. We are not to expect the completeness of a Body of Divinity, in a book of practical devotion. The Editor might have supplied some doctrinal elucidations in the form of notes; but they would have been unwelcome to those whose sentiments on these points differ from his own, and increased the bulk and cost of the book, without aiding its specific object: viz. a call to nominal Christians to aspiring efforts after perfect purity and devotedness.

It is hoped that the publication, in its present form, will prove an important and acceptable service to all who seek for themselves a high standard of Christian attainment, or make the giving of religious books one of their modes of doing good.

Boston, Aug. 3, 1835.

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MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

THE wish to know all we can of a writer, any of whose works have acquired a lasting reputation, or have greatly interested and improved us, is certainly natural. It may also be as profitable as it is gratifying.

WILLIAM LAW, the author of the following work, was born at King's Cliffe, in Northamptonshire, England, in 1686. He was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was elected to a fellowship, as a reward for his distinguished talents and literary progress. He left the University in 1712; choosing rather to vacate his fellowship, than violate his conscience by an oath, which he did not approve. He then officiated for some years, as a curate in London, and as tutor to Edward Gibbon, father of the celebrated historian.

He is said to have refused some of the best preferments in the Bishop of London's gift, which were offered to him by his friend, Dr. Sherlock, as a reward for one of his works. He afterwards went to reside at his native village of King's Cliffe, in the family of Mrs. Hesther Gibbon, whose brother he had educated, and where, as he never married, he spent the rest of his life.

Mr. Law was, in person, well formed, of rather a dark complexion, and remarkably cheerful in his temper. He rarely passed more than two hours in the company of any person; but a great part of his time was devoted to communion with God, which he esteemed his highest glory and joy. With a very small property, he was remarkably charitable, particularly to his poor neighbors. His charities were not withheld from the most unworthy, but, in their distribution, he ever aimed to reform the vicious, and encourage the industrious poor. He set so little value on money, except as a means of doing good, that he gave away the copyrights of all his publications, amounting to seventeen. Once, however, his publishers insisted upon his receiving a hundred guineas for one of them.

His writings embraced a wide variety of topics, and made him extensively known as an eminent Christian divine, a genius without vanity, a scholar without pride, a logician whose reason was the handmaid of devotion, a cross-bearing disciple of a crucified Master, whose lovely spirit lived and spoke in him.

In the family where he lived, he had the reputation of a worthy and eminently pious man, who believed all that he professed, and practiced all that he enjoined. It is to be regretted that in his last years he became tinctured with the mysticism of Jacob Behmen. We give one or two extracts from his letters, written about the year 1750, as specimens of his correspondence.

The first, in 1749, is from a letter to an inquiring friend:

"'Oh, happy famine!' might the poor prodigal have well said, 'which, by reducing me to the necessity of asking to eat husks with swine, brought

me to myself, and caused my return to my first happiness in my father's house.' Your way is as short, and your success as certain as his was. You have no more to do than he had. You need not call out for books and methods of devotion; for in your present state, much reading, and borrowed prayers, are not your best methods. All that you are to offer to God, all that is to help you to find Him to be your Saviour and Redeemer, is best taught and expressed by the distressed state of your heart. 'Come unto me,' says the holy Jesus, 'all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' Here, my dear friend, is more for you to live upon, more light for your mind, more of unction for your heart, than in volumes of human instruction. Pick up the words of the holy Jesus, and beg of him to be the light and life of your soul."

Again, to the same, in 1750:

"Do not expect or look for the same degrees of sensible fervor. The matter lies not there. Nature will have its share; but the ups and downs of that are to be overlooked."

Again, in 1751:

"I am greatly rejoiced at your expressing so feeling a sense of the benefit of prayer; and hope you will every day be more and more raised to, and united with, God, by it. I love no mysterious depths or heights of speculation, covet no knowledge, want to see no ground of nature, grace and creature, but so far as it brings me nearer to God, forces me to forget and renounce every thing for Him, to do every thing in Him, and for Him; and to give every breathing, moving, stirring intention and desire of my heart, soul, spirit, and life, to Him.

"My dear friend, have eyes shut and ears

stopped to every thing that is not a step in that ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. Reading is good, hearing is good, conversation and meditation are good; but then they are only good at times, and occasions, in a certain degree; and must be used with such caution as we eat and drink, and refresh ourselves, or they will bring forth in us the fruits of intemperance. But the spirit of prayer is for all times and occasions; it is a lamp that is always burning, a light that is ever shining; every thing calls for it, every thing is to be done in it, and governed by it.

"Near the conclusion of yours, you say, since your last to me, you have met with a great many trials, disagreeable to flesh and blood; but that adhering to God, is always your blessed relief.

"Yet permit me, on this occasion, to transcribe a memorandum or two from an old scrap of paper, which has long laid by me for my own use.

"'1. Receive every inward and outward trouble, every disappointment, pain, uneasiness, or darkness, temptation, and desolation, with both thy hands, as a true opportunity, and blessed occasion, of dying to self, and entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering Saviour.

"'2. Look at no inward or outward trouble in any other view; reject every other thought about it; and then every kind of trial and distress will become the blessed day of thy prosperity.

"'3. That state is best, which exerciseth the highest faith in, and fullest resignation to, God.'"

Suitable to Mr. Law's devoted life, was the triumphant manner of his death. The friend, to whom the preceding letters were addressed, gives the following interesting account of his last moments: "Away with these filthy garments," said the dying saint, "I feel a sacred fire kindled in

my soul, which will destroy every thing contrary to itself, and burn as a flame of divine love to all eternity." These are truly sublime words, worthy to be engraven on our hearts. He died April 9, 1761, aged 75 years.

Gibbon, the historian, has left on record the following opinion of the present work:

"Mr. Law's masterpiece, the 'Serious Call,' is still read as a popular and powerful book of devotion. His precepts are rigid, but they are formed and derived from the Gospel; his satire is sharp, but his wisdom is from the knowledge of human life; and many of his portraits are not unworthy the pen of La Bruyere. If there yet exists a spark of piety in his reader's mind, he will soon kindle it into a flame; and a philosopher must allow that he is more consistent in his principles than any of the tribe of mystic writers. He handles with equal severity and truth the strange contradiction between faith and practice in the Christian world."

But more valuable still is the following testimony, from an English Clergyman, to its powerful effects in his own congregation. "I preached and labored among them," he says, "incessantly; and yet, after all, was convinced my work had been as fruitless as casting pearls before swine. The drunkard continued his nocturnal practices, and the voice of the swearer was still heard in our streets. However, I was determined to leave no means untried for bringing this profane and obdurate people to a sense of their duty. Accordingly, I purchased many religious books, and distributed them among them, but, alas! could perceive no visible effects. In short, I had the grief to find that all my labor had proved in vain, and was ready to cry out with Paul, 'Who is

sufficient for these things?' About this time I happened to peruse a treatise of Mr. Law's, entitled, 'A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,' with which I was so charmed and greatly edified, that I resolved my flock should partake of the same spiritual food. *I, therefore, gave to each person in my parish one of those useful books,* and charged them upon my blessing, (for I consider them as my children,) to carefully peruse the same. My perseverance was now rewarded with success; and I had the satisfaction of beholding my people reclaimed from a life of folly and impiety, to a life of holiness and devotion."

The fact above stated, may furnish a useful hint to other pastors.

From some lines published after his decease, in honor of his memory, we select the following, as a fitting close to this brief Memoir:

"Awaked by thee, we feel the heavenly fire,
And with seraphic flames to God aspire;
Thy pious zeal, transfused to other hearts,
New springs of bliss, and nobler life imparts.
No time, no numbers, can exhaust thy mine;
Thy gifts are full? posterity is thine.
Through future ages shall thy labors go,
Like streams enriching nations as they flow."

J. N. B.

A

SERIOUS CALL

TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE.

CHAP. I.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION.

DEVOTION is neither private nor public prayer: but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given or devoted to God. He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the will of God—who considers God in every thing, serves God in every thing, and makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory.

We readily acknowledge, that Gods' will is to be the rule and measure of our prayers,—that in them we are to look wholly unto Him, and act wholly for Him, that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things, and such ends as are suitable to his glory. But let any one find out the reason why he is to be thus strictly pious in his

prayers, and he will find the same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other parts of his life. For there is not the least shadow of a reason, why we should make God the rule and measure of our prayers, why we should then look wholly unto Him, and pray according to his will; but what equally proves it necessary for us to look wholly unto God, and make Him the rule and measure of all the other actions of our life. Any ways of life, any employment of our parts, time or money, that is not strictly according to the will of God, that is not for such ends as are suitable to his glory, are as great absurdities and failings, as prayers that are not according to the will of God. For there is no other reason, why our prayers should be according to the will of God, and should have nothing in them, but what is wise, and holy, but that our lives may be of the same nature, full of the same wisdom, and heavenly tempers, that we may live unto God in the same spirit that we pray unto Him. Were it not our strict duty to live by reason, and to devote all our actions to God, were it not absolutely necessary to walk before Him in all holiness, doing every thing in his name, and for his glory, there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers. Nay, such prayers would be absurdities, they would be like prayers for wings, when it was no part of our duty to fly.

As sure therefore as there is any wisdom in praying for the Spirit of God, so sure is it, that

we are to make that Spirit the rule of all our actions. As sure as it is our duty to look wholly to God in our prayers, so sure is it, that it is our duty to live wholly to God in our lives. But we can no more be said to live to God, unless we live unto Him in all the ordinary actions of our life, than we can be said to pray unto God, unless our prayers look wholly unto Him. So that unreasonable and absurd ways of life, whether in labor or diversion, whether they consume our time or our money, are like unreasonable and absurd prayers, and are as truly an offence unto God.

It is for want of knowing, or at least considering this, that we see such a ridiculous mixture in the lives of many people. You see them strict as to some times and places of devotion; but in their manner of spending time and money, in their cares and fears, in their pleasures and indulgences, in their labor and diversions they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world make a jest of those that are devout, because they see their devotion goes no farther than their prayers; and that when they are over, they live no more unto God, till the time of prayer returns again; but live by the same humor and fancy, and in as full an enjoyment of all the follies of life, as other people.

Julius is very fearful of missing public worship; all the parish supposes him to be sick, if he is not at church. But if you ask him why he spends

the rest of his time by humor or chance—why he is a companion of the silliest people in their most silly pleasures? why he is ready for every impertinent entertainment and diversion? why there is no amusement too trifling to please him? why he is busy at balls and assemblies? why he gives himself up to idle, gossiping conversation? why he lives in foolish friendships and fondness for particular persons, that neither want nor deserve any particular kindness? why he allows himself in foolish hatreds and resentments against particular persons, without considering that he is to love every body as himself? If you ask him why he never puts his conversation, his time, and fortune under the rules of religion, Julius has no more to say for himself, than the most disorderly person. The whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against debauchery and intemperance. He that lives in such a course of idleness and folly, lives no more according to the religion of Jesus Christ, than he that lives in gluttony and intemperance.

If a man should tell Julius that there was no occasion for so much constancy at prayers, and that he might, without any harm to himself, neglect public religious services as the generality of people do, Julius would think such a one to be no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company. But if a person only tells him that he may live as the generality of the world does, that he may enjoy himself as others do, that he may

spend his time and money as people of fashion do, that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the generality, and gratify his tempers and passions as most people do, Julius never suspects that man to want a Christian spirit, or that he is doing the devil's work.

Yet if Julius was to read the New Testament from the beginning to the end, he would find his course of life condemned in every page.

Indeed there cannot any thing be imagined more absurd in itself, than wise and heavenly prayers added to a life of vanity and folly, where neither labor, diversions, time nor money, are under the direction of the wisdom and heavenly tempers of our prayers. If we see a man pretending to act wholly with regard to God in every thing that he did, that would neither spend time nor money, or take any labor or diversion, but so far as he could act according to strict principles of reason and piety, and yet neglecting all prayer, whether public or private, should we not wonder how he could have so much folly? Yet this is as reasonable as for any person to pretend to strictness in devotion, to be careful of observing times and places of prayer, and yet letting the rest of his life, his time and labor, his talents and money be disposed of, without any regard to strict rules of piety and devotion. For to be weak and foolish in spending our time and fortune is no greater a mistake, than to be weak and foolish in relation to our prayers. And to allow

ourselves in any ways of life that neither are nor can be offered to God, is the same irreligion as to neglect our prayers, or use them in such a manner, as makes them an offering unworthy of God.

Our blessed Savior and his apostles call us to renounce the world, and differ in every temper and way of life, from the spirit and way of the world:—to be as babes, born into a new state of things, to live as pilgrims in spiritual watching, in holy fear, and heavenly aspiring after another life:—to take up our daily cross, to deny ourselves, to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit:—to forsake the pride and vanity of riches, to take no thought for the morrow, to live in the profoundest state of humility, to rejoice in worldly sufferings:—to reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; to bear injuries, to forgive and bless our enemies, and to love mankind as God loveth them:—to give up our whole hearts and affections to God, and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory.

This is the common devotion which our blessed Savior taught, in order to make it the common life of all Christians. I call these duties the devotion of our common life, because if they are to be practised, they must be made parts of our common life; they can have no place any where else.

If contempt of the world, and heavenly affec-

tion, is a necessary temper of Christians, it is necessary that this temper appear in the manner of using the world, because it can have no place any where else. If self-denial be a condition of salvation, it must make a part of ordinary life. If humility be a Christian duty, then life is to be a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If poverty of spirit be necessary, it must be the spirit and temper of every day. If we are to relieve the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, it must be the common charity of our lives, as far as we can render ourselves able to perform it. If we are to love our enemies, we must make our common life a visible exercise and demonstration of that love. If content and thankfulness, if the patient bearing of evil be duties to God, they are the duties of every day If we are to be in Christ new creatures, we must show that we are so, by having new ways of living in the world.

Thus it is in all the virtues and holy tempers of Christianity. They are not ours, unless they be the virtues and tempers of our ordinary life. So that Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the customs, and gratifying the tempers which the spirit of the world delights in, that all its virtues which it makes necessary to salvation, are only so many ways of living above, and contrary to the world in all the common actions of our life. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of

the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affection, we do not live the lives of Christians.

But though it is thus plain, that this and this alone, is Christianity; yet it is as plain, that there is little of this to be found, even among the better sort of people. You see them often at the sanctuary, and pleased with fine preachers; but look into their lives, and you see them just the same sort of people as others are, that make no pretences to devotion. The difference that you find between them, is only the difference of their natural tempers. They have the same taste of the world, the same worldly cares, and fears, and joys; they have the same turn of mind, equally vain in their desires. You see the same fondness for state and equipage, the same pride and vanity of dress, the same self-love and indulgence, the same foolish friendships and groundless hatreds, the same levity of mind and trifling spirit, the same fondness of diversions, the same idle dispositions and vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as the rest of the world, that make no pretences to devotion.

I do not mean this comparison between people seemingly good, and professed rakes; but between people of sober lives. Let us take an instance in two modest women. Let it be supposed, that one of them is careful of times of devotion, and observes them through a sense of duty; and that the other has no hearty concern about it, but is at church seldom or often, just as it happens. Now

it is a very easy thing to see this difference between these persons. But when you have seen this, can you find any farther difference between them? Can you find that their common life is of a different kind? Are not the tempers, customs, and manners of the one, the same as of the other? Do they live as if they belonged to different worlds, had different views, rules, and measures of all their actions? Have they not the same goods and evils, are they not pleased and displeased in the same manner, and for the same things? Do they not live in the same course of life? Does one seem to be of this world, looking at the things that are temporal, and the other to be of another world, looking wholly at the things that are eternal? Does the one live in pleasure, delighting herself in show or dress, and the other live in self-denial and mortification, renouncing every thing that looks like vanity either of person, dress, or carriage? Does the one follow public diversions, and trifle away her time in idle visits and corrupt conversation; and does the other study all the arts of improving her time, living in prayer and watching, and such good works as may make all her time turn to her advantage, and be placed to her account at the last day? Is the one careless of expense, and glad to be able to adorn herself with every costly ornament of dress? and does the other consider her fortune as a talent given her by God, which is to be improved religiously, and no more to be spent in vain and

needless ornaments, than it is to be buried in the earth?

Where must you look to find one person of religion differing in this manner, from another that has none? And yet, if they do not differ in these things, can it be said, the one is a Christian and the other not?

If the doctrines of Christianity were practised, they would make a man as different from other people as to all worldly tempers, sensual pleasures, and the pride of life, as a wise man is different from a natural fool. It would be easy to know a Christian by his course of life. It is notorious that most professing Christians are not only like other men in their frailties and infirmities, which might be in some degree excusable; but the complaint is, they are like others in the main articles of their lives. They enjoy the world, and live every day in the same tempers, the same designs, and the same indulgences, as they who know not God. You may see them different from other people as to times and places of prayer, but generally like the rest of the world in all the other parts of their lives. That is adding Christian devotion to an heathen life. I have the authority of our blessed Savior for this remark, where he says, "Take no thought, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek." But if to be thus in love even with the necessary things of

this life, shows that we are not yet of a Christian spirit, but are like heathens; surely to enjoy the vanity and folly of the world as they did, to be like them in the main tempers of our lives, in self-love and indulgence, in sensual pleasures and diversions, in the vanity of dress, the love of show and greatness, or any other gaudy distinction of fortune, is a much greater sign of a heathen temper. And consequently they who add devotion to such a life, must be said to pray as Christians, but live as Heathens.

CHAP. II.

THE REASON WHY THE GENERALITY OF CHRISTIANS FALL SO FAR SHORT OF THE HOLINESS AND DEVOTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

It may now be reasonably inquired, how it comes to pass, that the lives even of the better sort of people are thus strangely contrary to the principles of Christianity.

But before I give a direct answer to this, I desire it may also be inquired, how it comes to pass that swearing is so common a vice among Christians. It is indeed not so common among women, as among men. Now I ask, how comes it that men are guilty of so gross and profane a sin as this? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it: it is against an express

commandment, and the most plain doctrine of our blessed Savior.*

Do but now find the reason why the generality of men live in this notorious vice, and then you will have found the reason why the generality even of the better sort of people, live so contrary to Christianity.

The reason of common swearing is this: men have not so much as the intention to please God in all their actions. Let a man but have so much piety as to intend to please God in all the actions of his life, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will never swear. It will be as impossible as it is for a man that intends to please his prince, to abuse him to his face.

It seems but a small and necessary part of piety to have such a sincere intention as this; and he has no reason to look upon himself as a disciple of Christ, who is not thus far advanced in piety. Yet it is purely for want of this degree of piety, that you see such a mixture of sin and folly in the lives even of the better sort of people. It is for want of this intention, that you see women profess devotion, yet live in all the folly and vanity of dress, wasting their time in idleness and pleasure For let but a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will find it as impossible to patch or paint, as to curse or swear; she will

* This vice is happily now much less common than when our author wrote. It still prevails, however, to an awful degree; especially in some sections of our country.—Ed.

no more desire to shine at balls and assemblies, or make a figure among those that are most finely dressed, than she will desire to dance upon a rope to please spectators. She will know that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the Christian spirit, as the other.

It was this general intention that made primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety, that made the goodly fellowship of the saints, and all the glorious army of martyrs and confessors. And if you here stop and ask yourself why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians, your heart will tell you that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday-worship that they did; and you are strict in it, because it is your full intention to be so. And when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary common life, when you intend to please God in all your actions, you will find it as possible as to be strictly exact in the service of the church. And when you have this intention to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing, you will find in you as great an aversion to every thing vain and impertinent in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to any thing that is profane. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, either of spending your time or your fortune, as you are now fearful of neglecting the public worship.

The clergyman. The tradesman.

Let a clergyman be but thus pious, and he will converse as if he had been brought up by an apostle. He will no more think and talk of noble preferment, than of noble eating or a glorious chariot. He will no more complain of the frowns of the world, or a small charge, than he will complain of the want of a laced coat, or a running horse. Let him but intend to please God in all his actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will know that there is nothing noble in a clergyman, but burning zeal for the salvation of souls; nor any thing poor in his profession, but idleness and a worldly spirit.

Let a tradesman have this intention, and it will make him a saint in his shop. His every day business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by being done in obedience to his will and pleasure. He will buy and sell, and labor and travel, because by so doing he can do some good to himself and others. But then, as nothing can please God but what is wise, and reasonable, and holy, so he will neither buy, nor sell, nor labor in any other manner, nor to any other end, but such as may be shown to be wise and reasonable and holy. He will therefore consider not what arts, or methods, or application, will soonest make him richer and greater than his brethren, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure; but he will consider what arts, methods, and application can make

worldly business most acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman; he cannot stop short of these degrees of piety, whenever it is his intention to please God in all his actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world.

Let the gentleman of birth and fortune but have this intention, and you will see how it will carry him from every appearance of evil, to every instance of piety and goodness. He cannot live by chance, or as humor carries him, because he knows that nothing can please God but a wise and regular course of life. He cannot live in idleness and indulgence, in sports and gaming, in pleasures and intemperance, in vain expenses and high living, because these things cannot be turned into means of piety, or made so many parts of a wise and religious life.

As he thus removes from all appearance of evil, so he hastens and aspires after every instance of goodness.—He does not ask what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praise-worthy. He does not ask whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madness of our pleasures, the vanity of our expenses, the richness of our equipage, and the careless consumption of our time; but he asks whether God is pleased with these things, or whether these are the appointed ways of gaining his favor. He does not inquire whether it be

pardonable to hoard up money, while the widow and the orphan, the sick and the prisoner want to be relieved; but he asks whether God has required these things at our hands, whether we shall be called to account at the last day for the neglect of them.

He will not therefore look at the lives of Christians, to learn how he ought to spend his estate; but he will look into the Scriptures, and make every doctrine, parable, precept, or instruction that relates to rich men, a law to himself in the use of his estate.

He denies himself many pleasures and indulgences which his estate could procure, because our blessed Savior says, "Wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." He will have but one rule for charity, and that will be, to spend all that he can that way; because the Judge of quick and dead has said, that all so given, is given to Him.

His hospitable table will not be only for the rich and wealthy to come and feast with him: because our blessed Lord has said, "When thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed. For they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." *Luke* xiv. 12, 13, 14.

This picture is not imaginary.

Let not any one look upon this as an imaginary description of charity, which cannot be put in practice. For it is so far from being an impracticable form of life, that it has been practised by great numbers of Christians. And it is so far from being impossible now, that if we can find any Christians, that sincerely intend to please God in all their actions as the best and happiest thing in the world, whether they be young or old, single or married, men or women, if they have but this intention, it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this height of charity, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it. For as all waste and unreasonable expense is done designedly and with deliberation, so no one can be guilty of it, whose constant intention is to please God in the use of his money.

I have chosen to explain this matter by appealing to this intention, because it makes the case so plain, and because every one that has a mind, may see it in the clearest light, and feel it in the strongest manner, only by looking into his own heart. For it is as easy for every person to know, whether he intends to please God in all his actions, as for any servant to know whether this be his intention towards his master. Every one can as easily tell how he lays out his money, and whether he considers how to please God in it, as he can tell where his estate is, and whether it be in money or land. So that no plea is left

for ignorance or frailty, as to this matter, every body is in the light, and every body has power. And no one can fail, but he that is not so much a Christian as to intend to please God in the use of his estate.

You see two persons, one is regular in public and private prayer, the other is not. Now the reason of this difference is not, that one has strength and power to observe prayer, and the other has not; but, that one intends to please God in the duties of devotion, and the other has no intention about it.—Now the case is the same in the right or wrong use of our time and money. You see one person throwing away his time in sleep and idleness, in visiting and diversions, and his money in the most vain and unreasonable expenses. You see another careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reason and religion, and spending all his money religiously; now the difference is not owing to this, that one has strength and power to do thus, and the other has not; but, that one intends to please God in the right use of all his time and all his money, and the other has no intention about it.

Here therefore let us judge ourselves, let us not vainly content ourselves with the common disorders of our lives, the vanity of our expenses, the folly of our diversions, the pride of our habits, the idleness of our lives, and the wasting of our time, fancying that these are such imperfections as we fall into through the unavoidable

weakness and frailty of our nature. But let us be assured, that these disorders of our common life are owing to this, that we have not so much Christianity as to intend to please God in all the actions of our life, as the best and happiest thing in the world. So that we must not look upon ourselves in a state of common and pardonable imperfection, but in such a state as wants the first and most fundamental principle of Christianity, viz. an intention to please God in all our actions.

This doctrine does not suppose that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our own power to make ourselves perfect. It only supposes that through the want of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions, we fall into such irregularities of life, as by the ordinary means of grace we should have power to avoid. And that we have not that perfection, which our present state of grace makes us capable of, because we do not so much as intend to have it. It only teaches us that the reason why you see no real mortification or self-denial, no eminent charity, no profound humility, no heavenly affection, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no eminent piety in the common lives of Christians, is this, because they do not so much as intend to be exact and exemplary in these virtues.

CHAP. III.

THE GREAT DANGER AND FOLLY OF NOT INTENDING TO BE AS EMINENT AS WE CAN, IN THE PRACTICE OF ALL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

ALTHOUGH the goodness of God, and his rich mercies in Christ Jesus are a sufficient assurance to us, that he will be merciful to our unavoidable infirmities, that is, to such failings as are the effects of ignorance or surprise: yet we have no reason to expect the same mercy towards those sins which we live in, through want of intention to avoid them.

A common swearer, who dies in that guilt, seems to have no title to the divine mercy; because he can no more plead any weakness or infirmity in his excuse, than the man that hid his talent in the earth, could plead his want of strength to keep it out of the earth. Now, if this be right reasoning, why do we not carry this way of reasoning to its true extent? Why do we not as much condemn every other error of life that has no weakness to plead in its excuse. If this be so bad, because it might be avoided, if we did but sincerely intend it, must not all other erroneous ways of life be very guilty, if we live in them, not through weakness, but because we never sincerely intend to avoid them?

For instance, you perhaps have made no progress in the most important Christian virtues,

you have scarce gone half way in humility and charity; now if your failure in these duties is purely owing to your want of *intention* of performing them in any true degree, have you not then as little to plead for yourself, and are you not as much without all excuse as the common swearer? Why, therefore do you not press these things home upon your conscience? Why do you not think it as dangerous for you to live in such defects as are in your power to amend, as it is dangerous for a common swearer to live in the breach of a duty, which it is in his power to observe? Is not negligence and a want of a sincere intention as blamable in one case as in another? You are, it may be, as far from Christian perfection, as the common swearer is from keeping the third commandment. Are you not therefore as much condemned by the doctrines of the gospel, as the swearer is by the third commandment?

If you are as forward in the Christian life as your best endeavors can make you, then you may justly hope that your imperfections will not be laid to your charge. But if your defects in piety, humility, and charity, are owing to your negligence and want of sincere attention to be as eminent as you can in these virtues, then you leave yourself as much without excuse as he that lives in the sin of swearing, through the want of a sincere intention to depart from it.

The salvation of our souls is set forth in Scrip

ture as a thing of difficulty, that requires all our diligence, that is to be "worked out with fear and trembling." We are told, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." That "many are called but few are chosen." And that many will miss their salvation, who seem to have taken some pains to obtain it; as in these words, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here our blessed Lord commands us to strive to enter in; because many will fail, who only seek to enter. By which we are plainly taught, that religion is a state of labor and striving, and that many will fail of salvation; not because they took no care or pains about it, but because they did not take pains and care enough; they *sought*, but did not *strive* to enter in.

Every Christian, therefore, should examine his life as well by these doctrines, as by the commandments. These doctrines are as plain marks of our condition, as the commandments are plain marks of our duty. For if salvation is only given to those who strive for it, then it is as reasonable for me to consider whether my course of life be a course of striving to obtain it, as to consider whether I am keeping any of the commandments.

If my religion is only a formal compliance with those modes of worship that are in fashion where I live; if it cost me no pains or trouble, if

it lays me under no restraints, if I have no careful thoughts and sober reflections about it, is it not great weakness to think that I am "striving to enter in at the strait gate?" If I am seeking every thing that can delight my senses and regale my appetites; spending my time and fortune in pleasures, diversions, and worldly enjoyments, a stranger to watchings, fastings, prayers, and mortifications, how can it be said that I am "working out my salvation with fear and trembling?"

We cannot offer to God the service of angels, nor obey him as man in a state of perfection could. But fallen men can do their best, and this perfection is required of us; it is only the perfection of our best endeavors, a careful labor to be as perfect as we can. But if we stop short of this, for aught we know, we stop short of the mercy of God, and leave ourselves nothing to plead from the terms of the gospel. For God has there made no promises of mercy to the slothful and negligent.

The best way for any one to know how much he ought to aspire after holiness, is to consider not how much will make his present life easy: but to ask himself how much he thinks will make him easy at the hour of death. Any man that dares be so serious as to put this question to himself will be forced to answer that at death every one will wish that he had been as perfect as human nature can be.

Is not this therefore sufficient to put us not only upon wishing, but laboring after all that perfection which we shall then lament the want of? Is it not excessive folly to be content with such a course of piety when we shall so want it as to have nothing else to comfort us? How can we carry a severer condemnation against ourselves, than to believe that at the hour of death we shall want the virtues of the saints, and wish that we had been among the first servants of God, and yet take no methods of arriving at their height of piety, while we are alive?

Though this is an absurdity that we easily pass over at present, while the health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise, hurry, pleasures, and business of the world, lead us on with eyes that see not, and ears that hear not; yet at death, it will set itself before us in dreadful magnitude, and our conscience will never let us take our eyes from it.

We see in worldly matters, what a torment self-condemnation is; and how hardly a man is able to forgive himself, when he has brought himself into any calamity or disgrace, purely by his own folly. The affliction is made doubly tormenting, because he is forced to charge it all upon himself, as his own act and deed, against the nature and reason of things, and contrary to the advice of his friends. By this we may in some degree guess how terrible the pain of that self-condemnation will be, when a man shall find himself in

Approach of death. The tradesman.

the miseries of death, under the severity of a self-condemning conscience; charging all his distress upon his own folly and madness, against the sense and reason of his own mind, against all the doctrines and precepts of religion, and contrary to all the instructions, calls and warnings both of God and man.

Penitens was a busy notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings; but died in the thirty-fifth year of his age.

A little before his death, when the doctors had given him over, some of his neighbors came one evening to see him; to whom he said,

"I see, my friends, the tender concern you have for me. You think how melancholy a case it is to see so young a man, and in such flourishing business, delivered up to death. And perhaps, had I visited any of you in my condition, I should have had the same thoughts.

"But now, my friends, my thoughts are no more like your thoughts, than my condition is like yours. It is no trouble to me now to think that I am to die young, or before I have raised an estate. These things are now sunk into such mere *nothings*, that I have no name little enough to call them by. For if in a few days, or hours, I am to leave this carcass to be buried in the earth, and to find myself either for ever happy in the favor of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace, can any words sufficiently express the littleness of every thing else?

"Is there any dream like the dream of life, which amuses us with the neglect and disregard of these things? Is there any folly like the folly of our manly state, which is too wise and busy to be at leisure for these reflections? When we consider death as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyments of this life. We seldom mourn over an old man that dies rich; but we lament the young, that are taken away in the progress of their fortune. You yourselves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead; but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life. This is the wisdom of our manly thoughts. And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this? For what is there miserable or dreadful in death, but the consequences of it? When a man is dead, what does any thing signify to him, but the state he is then in?

"Our poor friend *Lepidus* died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a feast. Do you think it is now part of his trouble that he did not live till that entertainment was over? Feasts, and business, and pleasures, and enjoyments, seem great things to us, whilst we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them, they all sink into an equal littleness; and the soul that is separated from the body, no more laments the loss of business than the losing of a feast.

Plain questions. A strange thing.

"If I am going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve, that this happened to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven before I had made a few more bargains, or stood a little longer behind a counter? And if I am to go amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content, that this did not happen to me till I was old and full of riches?

"If good angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was dying upon a poor bed in a garret? And if God has delivered me up to evil spirits, to be dragged to places of torment, could it be any comfort to me, that they found me upon a bed of state?

"But, my friends, how am I surprised that I have not always had these thoughts? For what is there in the terrors of death, in the vanities of life, or the necessities of piety, but what I might have as easily and fully seen in any part of my life? What a strange thing is it, that a little health, or the poor business of a shop, should keep us so senseless of the great things that are coming fast upon us!

"Just as you came into my chamber, I was thinking what numbers of souls there are in the world in my condition at this very time, surprised with a summons to the other world: some taken from their shops and farms, others from their sports and pleasures, these at suits at law, those at gaming tables, some on the road, others

at their own fire-sides, and all seized at an hour when they thought nothing of it: frighted at the approach of death, confounded at the vanity of all their labors, designs, and projects, astonished at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort. Their consciences fly in their faces, bringing all their sins to their remembrance, tormenting them with deepest convictions of their own folly, presenting them with the sight of the angry Judge, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

"Oh my friends! bless God that you are not of this number, that you have time and strength to employ yourselves in such works of piety as may bring you peace at the last. And take this along with you, that there is nothing but a life of great piety, or a death of great stupidity, that can keep off these apprehensions. Had I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for one year more, that I might present unto God one year of such devotion and good works, as I never before so much as intended.

"Perhaps, when you consider that I have lived free from scandal and debauchery, and in the communion of the church, you wonder to see me so full of remorse and self-condemnation at the approach of death.

"But alas! what a poor thing is it to have

lived only free from gross sins, which is all that I can say of myself. But the thing that now surprises me above all wonders, is this, that I never had so much as a general intention of living up to the piety of the gospel! This never so much as entered into my head or my heart. I never once in my life considered whether I was living as the laws of religion direct, or whether my way of life was such as would procure me the mercy of God at this hour.

"And can it be thought that I have kept the gospel terms of salvation, without ever so much as intending in any serious and deliberate manner either to know them or keep them? Can it be thought that I have pleased God with such a life as he requires, though I have lived without ever considering what he requires, or how much I have performed? How easy a thing would salvation be, if it could fall into my careless hands, who had never had so many serious thoughts about it, as about any one common bargain that I have made!

"Had I only frailties and imperfections to lament at this time, I should lie here humbly trusting in the mercies of God. But alas! how can I call general disregard, and thorough neglect of all religious improvement, a frailty and imperfection? It was as much in my power to have been exact, and careful, and diligent in a course of piety, as in the business of my trade. I could have called in as many helps, have prac-

tised as many rules, and been taught as many certain methods of holy living, as I could of thriving in my shop, had I but so intended and desired it.

"Oh my friends! a life, unconcerned and inattentive to the duties of religion, is so without all excuse, so unworthy of the mercy of God, such a shame to the sense and reason of our minds, that I can hardly conceive a greater punishment, than for a man to be thrown into the state that I am in, to reflect upon it."

Penitens was here going on, but was stopped by a convulsion, which never suffered him to speak any more. He lay convulsed about twelve hours, and then gave up the ghost.

Now if every reader would imagine this *Penitens* to have been some particular acquaintance or relation of his, and fancy that he saw and heard all that is here described, that he stood by his bed-side when his poor friend lay in such distress and agony, lamenting the folly of his past life, it would in all probability teach him such wisdom as never entered into his heart before. If to this, he should consider, how often he himself might have been surprised in the same state of negligence, and made an example to the rest of the world, this double reflection, both upon the distress of his friend, and the goodness of that God, who had preserved him from it, would in all likelihood soften his heart into holy tempers, and make him turn the remainder of his life into a regular course of piety.

This, therefore, being so useful a meditation, I shall here leave the reader, as I hope, seriously engaged in it.

CHAP. IV.

WE CAN PLEASE GOD IN NO STATE OR EMPLOYMENT OF LIFE, BUT BY INTENDING AND DEVOTING IT ALL TO HIS HONOR AND GLORY.

HAVING in the first chapter stated the general nature of devotion, and shown, that it implies not any form of prayer, but a form of life offered to God, not at particular times or places, but every where and in every thing; I shall now descend to some particulars, and show how we are to devote our labor time and fortune unto God.

As a Christian should consider every place as holy, because God is there, so he should look upon every part of his life as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offered to God.

The profession of a minister is a holy profession, because it is a ministration in holy things, an attendance at the altar. But worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord, by being done as a service to him, and in conformity to his divine will. For as all men and all things in the world, as truly belong unto God, as any things, or persons that are outwardly devoted to divine service; so all things are to be

used, and all persons are to act in their several states and employments for the glory of God.

Men of worldly business must not look upon themselves as at liberty to live to their own humors and tempers, because their employment is of a worldly nature.

As the whole world is God's, so the whole world is to act for God. All men have the same relation to God; all have all their powers and faculties from God, therefore, all are obliged to act for God with all their powers and faculties.

As all things are God's, so all things are to be used and regarded as such. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God, as for angels to abuse things in heaven; because God is just the same Lord of all on earth, as he is the Lord of all in heaven. Things may, and must differ in their use, but yet they are all to be used according to the will of God.

As there is but one God and Father of us all, whose glory gives light and life to every thing that lives; whose presence fills all places, whose power supports all beings, whose providence rules all events; so every thing that lives, whether in heaven or earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, they must all with one spirit, live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of them all. Angels as angels in their heavenly minis trations, but men as men, women as women

ministers as ministers, and deacons as deacons; some with things spiritual, and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections.

This is the common business of all persons in this world. It is not left to any women in the world to trifle away their time in the follies and impertinences of a fashionable life, nor to any men to resign themselves up to worldly cares and concerns. It is not left to the rich to gratify their passions in the indulgences and pride of life; nor to the poor to vex and torment their hearts with the poverty of their state; but men and women, rich and poor, must with bishops and priests, walk before God in the same wise and holy spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers, and in the same discipline and care of their souls; not only because they have all the same rational nature, and are servants of the same God, but because they all want the same holiness to make them fit for the same happiness, to which they are called. It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Christians, whether men or women, to consider themselves as persons that are devoted to holiness; and so order their common ways of life by such rules of reason and piety, as may turn it into continual service unto Almighty God.

Now to make our labor or employment an acceptable service unto God, we must carry it

on with the same spirit and temper, that is required in giving of alms, or any work of piety. For, if "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God;" if we are to "use this world as if we used it not;" if we are to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God;" if we are to "live by faith, and not by sight," and to "have our conversation in heaven;" then it is necessary, that the common way of our life in every state, be made to glorify God by such tempers as make our prayers and adorations acceptable to him. For, if we are worldly or earthly-minded in our employments, if they are carried on with vain desires, and covetous tempers, we can no more be said to live to the glory of God, than gluttons and drunkards can be said to eat and drink to the glory of God.

As the glory of God is one and the same thing, so whatever we do suitable to it, must be done with one and the same spirit. That same state and temper of mind which make our alms or devotions acceptable, must also make our labor, or employment, a proper offering unto God. If a man labors to be rich, and pursues his business, that he may raise himself to the world, he is no longer serving God; he is acting under other masters, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he that gives alms, that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard of men. These tempers of worldy pride and

vain glory, are not only evil, when they mix with our good works, but they have the same evil nature, and make us odious to God, when they enter into the common business of our employment.

Most of the employments of life are in their own nature lawful; and may be made a substantial part of our duty to God, if we engage in them only so far, and for such ends, as are suitable to beings, who are to live above the world, all the time that they live in the world. This is the only measure of application to any worldly business. Let it be what it will, or where it will, it must have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is consistent with an hearty, daily, careful preparation of ourselves for another life.

Now he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleness, cannot be said either to feel or believe the truths of Christianity. If he thinks any thing great or important in human business, can he be said, to feel or believe those Scriptures which represent this life, and its greatest things, as bubbles, vapors, dreams, and shadows? If he thinks figure, and show, and worldly glory, to be any proper happiness of a Christian, how can he be said to feel or believe this doctrine, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for

the Son of man's sake." Surely, if there was any real happiness in figure, and show, and worldly glory, it could not be matter of the highest joy, when we are torn from them. If, therefore, a man will show, that he believes the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he must live above the world. This is the temper that must enable him to do the business of life, and yet live wholly unto God, and to go through worldly employment with a heavenly mind. And it is as necessary, that people live in their employments with this temper, as it is necessary that their employment itself be lawful.

A tradesman may justly think that it is agreeable to the will of God, for him to sell such things as are innocent and useful; such as help both himself and others to a reasonable support, and enable them to assist those that want to be assisted. But if instead of this, he trades only with regard to himself, without any other rule than his own temper—if it be his chief end in it to grow rich, that he may live in figure and indulgences, and be able to retire from business to idleness and luxury—his trade, as to him, loses all its innocency, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God, that it is only a more plausible course of covetousness, self-love, and ambition. Such a one turns the necessities of employments into pride and covetousness, just as the sot and epicure turn the necessities of eating and drinking into glut-

tony and drunkenness. He that is up early and late, that sweats and labors, that he may be some time or other rich, and live in pleasure and indulgence, lives no more to the glory of God, than he that plays and gambles for the same ends. For though there is a great difference between trading and gaming, yet most of that difference is lost, when men trade with the same desires and tempers, that others game. Charity and fine dressing are things very different; but if some give alms for the same reasons that others dress fine, (only to be admired,) charity is then but like the vanity of fine clothes.

Calidus has traded above thirty years in the greatest city of the kingdom; constantly increasing his trade and his fortune. Every hour of the day is with him an hour of business; and though he eats and drinks very heartily, yet every meal seems to be in a hurry. Calidus ends every day at the tavern, but has not leisure to be there till near nine o'clock. He is always forced to drink a good hearty glass, to drive thoughts of business out of his head, and make his spirits drowsy enough for sleep. He does business all the time that he is rising, and has settled several matters before he can get to his counting-room. Calidus will tell you with great pleasure, that he has been in this hurry for so many years, and that it must have killed him long ago, but that it has been a rule with him, to get out of town every Saturday, and make

the Sunday a day of quiet and good refreshment in the country.

He is now so rich that he would leave off his business, and amuse his old age with building and furnishing a fine house in the country, but that he is afraid he should grow melancholy if he was to quit his business. If thoughts of religion happen at any time to steal into his head, Calidus contents himself with thinking that he never was a friend to heretics and infidels, that he has always been civil to the minister of his parish, and very often given something to charity.

Now this way of life is at such a distance from all the doctrine and discipline of Christianity, that no one can live in it through ignorance or frailty. Calidus can no more imagine, that "he is born of the spirit;" that he is "in Christ a new creature;" that he lives here as "a stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections upon things above, and laying up treasures in heaven," —he can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an apostle, working miracles and preaching the gospel.

The generality of trading people, especially in great towns, are too much like Calidus. You see them all the week buried in business, unable to think of any thing else; and then spending the Sunday in idleness and refreshment, in wandering into the country, or in visits, so as to make it often the worst day of the week.

Why so many live thus.

Now they do not live thus, because they cannot support themselves with less care and application to business; but they live thus because they want to grow rich, and to maintain their families in such condition, as a reasonable Christian life had no occasion for. Take away but this temper, and then people of all trades, will find themselves at leisure to live every day like Christians, to be careful of every duty of the gospel, and to live in a visible course of religion. The only way to do this, is for people to consider their trade, as something that they are obliged to devote to the glory of God, something that they are to do only in such a manner, as that they may make it a duty to him. Nothing can be right in business, that is not under these rules. The apostle commands servants "to be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart as unto Christ: not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: with good will, doing service as unto the Lord, and not unto men."

This passage sufficiently shows, that all Christians are to live wholly unto God in every state and condition, doing the work of their common calling in such a manner, and for such ends, as to make it a part of their devotion or service to God. For if poor slaves are not to comply with their business as men pleasers, if they are to look to God in all their actions, and

serve "in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord," surely men of other employments and conditions must be as much obliged to go through their business with the same singleness of heart; not as pleasing the vanity of their own minds, not as gratifying their own selfish, worldly passions, but as the servants of God in all that they have to do. For surely no one will say that a slave is to devote his state of life unto God, and make the will of God the sole rule and end of his service, but that a tradesman need not act with the same spirit of devotion. This is as absurd, as to make it necessary for one man to be more just or faithful than another.

It is therefore absolutely certain, that no Christian is to enter any further into business, nor for any other ends, than such as he can in singleness of heart offer unto God, as a reasonable service. The Son of God has redeemed us for this only end, that we should by a life of reason and piety, live to the glory of God. This is the only rule and measure for every order and state of life. Without this rule, the most lawful employment becomes a sinful state of life. Take away this from the life of a clergyman, and his holy profession serves only to expose him to greater damnation. Take away this from tradesmen, and shops are but so many houses of greediness and filthy lucre. Take away this from gentlemen, and the course of their life becomes a course of sensuality, pride and wan-

tonness. Take away this rule from our tables, and all falls into gluttony and drunkenness. Take away this measure from our dress and habits, and all is turned into paint, and glitter, and ridiculous ornaments. Take away this from the use of our fortunes, and you will find people sparing in nothing but charity. Take away this from our diversions, and you will find no sports too silly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt to be the pleasure of Christians.

So that men must not content themselves with the lawfulness of their employments, but must consider whether they use them as they are to use every thing, as strangers and pilgrims, that are to follow him in a wise and heavenly course of life, in the mortification of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the blessed enjoyment of God.

To be vain, or proud, or covetous, or ambitious in the common course of our business, is as contrary to these holy tempers of Christianity, as cheating and dishonesty. If a glutton was to say in excuse of his gluttony, that he only eats such things as it is lawful to eat, he would make as good an excuse for himself as the greedy, covetous, ambitious tradesman, that should say, he only deals in lawful business. As a Christian is not only required to be honest, but to be of a Christian spirit, so all tempers that are contrary to these, are as contrary to Christianity, as cheating is contrary to honesty.

If we could so divide ourselves, as to be humble in some respects, and proud in others, such humility would be of no service to us, because God as truly requires us to be humble in all our actions and designs, as he does to be honest in all our actions and designs. And as a man is not honest, because he is so to a great many people, or upon several occasions, but because truth and honesty is the measure of all his dealings with every body; so is the case in humility, or any other temper, it must be the general ruling habit of our minds and extend itself to all our actions and designs.

We sometimes talk, as if a man might be humble in some things and proud in others, humble in his dress, but proud of his learning, humble in his person, but proud in his views and designs. But though this may pass in common discourse, where few things are said according to strict truth, it cannot be allowed when we examine into the nature of our actions. It is very possible for a man that lives by cheating, to be very punctual in paying for what he buys; but then every one is assured, that he does not do so out of any principle of true honesty. It is very possible for a man that is proud of his estate, ambitious in his views, or vain of his learning, to disregard his dress, and person, in such a manner as a truly humble man would do. But to suppose that he does so out of a true principle of humility, is as absurd as to suppose

that a cheat pays for what he buys, out of a principle of honesty.

As therefore all kinds of dishonesty destroy our pretences to an honest principle of mind, so all kinds of pride destroy our pretences to an humble spirit.

No one wonders that those prayers and alms, which proceed from pride and ostentation are odious to God; but yet it is as easy to show, that pride is as pardonable there, as any where else. If we could suppose that God rejects pride in our prayers and alms, but bears with it in dress, person, or estate, it would be the same thing as to suppose that God condemns falsehood in some actions, but allows it in others. For pride in one thing differs from pride in another thing, as the robbing of one man differs from the robbing of another.

Again, if pride and ostentation is so odious that it destroys the merit of the most reasonable actions, it must be equally odious in those actions, which are only founded in the infirmity of our nature. Thus, alms are commanded by God, as excellent in themselves, as true instances of divine temper, but clothes are only allowed to cover our shame; surely therefore it must at least be as odious a degree of pride, to be vain in our clothes, as to be vain in our alms.

Again, we are commanded to pray without ceasing, as a means of rendering our souls more exalted and divine, but we are forbidden to lay

up for ourselves treasures upon earth; and can we think that it is not as bad to be vain of those treasures which we are forbidden to lay up, as to be vain of those prayers which we are commanded to make.

Women are required to have their heads covered, and to adorn themselves with shamefacedness. If therefore they are vain in those things which are expressly forbidden, if they patch and paint that part, which can only be adorned by shamefacedness, surely they have as much to repent of for such a pride as they have, whose pride is the motive to their prayers and charity. This must be granted, unless we will say, that it is more pardonable to glory in our shame, than to glory in our virtue.

These instances are only to show us the great necessity of such a regular and uniform piety, as extends itself to all the actions of our common life.

We must eat, and drink, and dress, and discourse, according to the sobriety of the Christian spirit, and engage in no employments but such as we can truly devote unto God, nor pursue them any farther than so far as conduces to the reasonable ends of a holy life.

We must be honest, not only on particular occasions, and in such instances as are applauded in the world, easy to be performed and free from danger or loss, but from such a living principle of justice, as makes us love truth and

integrity in all its instances, and follow it through all dangers, and against all opposition.

We must be humble, not only in such instances as are expected in the world, or suitable to our inclinations, or confined to particular occasions; but in such a humility of spirit, as renders us meek and lowly in the whole course of our lives, as shows itself in our dress, our persons, our conversation, our enjoyment of the world, the tranquillity of our minds, patience under injuries, submission to superiors, and condescensions to those that are below us, and in all the outward actions of our lives.

We must devote not only times and places to prayer, but be every where in the spirit of devotion, with hearts always set towards heaven, looking up to God in all our actions, and doing every thing as his servants; living in the world as in a holy temple of God, and always worshipping him, though not with our lips, yet with the thankfulness of our hearts, the holiness of our actions, and the pious and charitable use of all his gifts. That we must not only send up petitions and thoughts now and then to Heaven, but must go through all our worldly business with a heavenly spirit, as members of Christ's mystical body, who with new hearts, and new minds, are to turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatness and glory in the kingdom of heaven.

Enough, I hope, has been said to show the

necessity of thus introducing religion into all the actions of your common life, and of living and acting with the same regard to God in all that you do, as in your prayers and alms.

CHAP. V.

PERSONS THAT ARE FREE FROM THE NECESSITY OF LABOR ARE TO CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS DEVOTED TO GOD IN A HIGHER DEGREE.

As no one is to live in his employment according to his own humor, or for such ends as please his own fancy, but is to do all his business in such a manner, as to make it a service to God; so those who have no particular employment, are so far from being left at greater liberty to live to themselves, to pursue their own humors, and spend their time and fortune as they please, that they are under greater obligations of living wholly to God in all their actions. They are those, of whom much will be required, because much is given unto them.

A slave can only live unto God in one particular way; that is, by religious patience and submission in his state of slavery. But all ways of holy living, all instances, and all kinds of virtue, lie open to those who are masters of themselves, their time and their fortune.

You are no laborer, or tradesman; you are neither merchant nor soldier; consider yourself, therefore, as placed in a state in some degree like that of good angels, who are sent into the world as ministering spirits, for the general good of mankind, to assist, protect, and minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. For the more you are free from the common necessities of men, the more you are to imitate the higher perfections of angels.

Had you, *Serena*, been obliged by the necessities of life, to wash clothes for your maintenance, or to wait upon some mistress, that demanded all your labor, it would then be your duty to serve and glorify God, by such humility, obedience, and faithfulness, as might adorn that state of life. It would then be recommended to your care, to improve that one talent to its greatest height. That when the time came that mankind were to be rewarded for their labors by the great Judge, you might be received with a "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord."

But as God has given you five talents, as he has placed you above the necessities of life, he has left you in the happy liberty of choosing the most exalted ways of virtue. As he has enriched you with many gifts of fortune, and left you nothing to do, but to make the best use of variety of blessings; to make the most of a short life, to study your own perfection, the

honor of God and the good of your neighbor; so it is now your duty to imitate the greatest servants of God, to inquire how the most eminent saints have lived, to study all the arts and methods of perfection, and to set no bounds to your love and gratitude to the bountiful Author of so many blessings. It is now your duty to turn your five talents into five more, and to consider how your time, leisure, health, and fortune, may be made so many happy means of purifying your soul, improving your fellow creatures, and of carrying you to the greatest heights of eternal glory.

As you have no mistress to serve, let your own soul be the object of your daily care and attendance. Be sorry for its impurities, spots and imperfections, and study all the holy arts of restoring it to its natural and primitive purity. Delight in its service, and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection. Nourish it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, humble it with patience, enliven it with psalms and hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory. Keep it in the presence of God, and teach it to imitate those guardian angels, who, though they attend to the lowest human affairs, yet "always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven."

The universal command. The reason.

This, *Serena*, is your profession. For as sure as God is one God, so sure it is, that he has but one command to all mankind, whether they be bond or free, rich or poor; and that is, to act up to the excellency of that nature which he has given to them; to live by reason, to walk in the light of religion, to use every thing as wisdom directs, and dedicate every condition of life to his service.

The reason why we are to do any thing as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to him, is the same reason, why we are to do every thing as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to him. That, which is a reason for our being wise and holy in the discharge of all our business, is the same reason for our being wise and holy in the use of all our money. As we have always the same nature, and are every where the servants of the same God, as every place is equally full of his presence, and every thing is equally his gift, so we must always act according to the reason of our nature; we must do every thing as the servants of God; we must live in every place, as in his presence; we must use every thing, as that which belongs to God.

Either this piety is to go through every way of life, and to extend to the use of every thing, or it is to go through no part of life. If we might forget ourselves, or forget God, at any

time, or in any place, it would be as lawful to do the same, at every time, and every place.

If therefore, some people fancy that they must be grave at church, but may be silly at home; that they must live by rule on Sunday, but may spend other days by chance; that they must have some times of prayer, but may waste the rest of their time as they please; that they must give some money in charity, but may spend the rest as they have a mind; such people have not enough considered the nature of religion. For he that upon principles of reason, can tell why it is good to be wise and heavenly minded at church, can tell that it is always desirable, to have the same tempers in all other places. He that truly knows, why he should spend any time well, knows that it is never allowable to throw any time away. He that rightly understands the reasonableness and excellency of charity, will know that it can never be excusable to waste any money in pride and folly, or any needless expenses.

If any one could show, that we need not always act as in the divine presence, that we need not consider and use every thing, as the gift of God, that we need not always live by reason, and make religion the rule of all our actions, the same arguments would show, that we need never act as in the presence of God, nor make religion and reason the measure of any of our actions.

Our glory and happiness. A mistake.

If therefore we are to live unto God at any time, or in any place, we are to live unto him at all times, and all places. If we are to use any thing as the gift of God, we are to use every thing as his gift. If we are to do any thing by strict rules of reason and piety, we ought to do every thing in the same manner. Because reason, and wisdom, and piety, are as much the best things at all times, and in all places, as they are at any time, or in any place.

If it is our glory and happiness to have a rational nature, that is endued with wisdom and reason, and is capable of imitating the divine nature; then it must be our glory and happiness, to improve our reason and wisdom, to act up to the excellency of our rational nature, and to imitate God in all our actions, to the utmost of our power. They therefore, who confine religion to times and places, and some little rules of retirement, who think that it is being too strict and rigid to introduce religion into common life, and make it give laws to all their actions and ways of living, not only mistake, but they mistake the whole nature of religion. For surely they mistake the whole nature of religion, who can think any part of their life is made more easy, for being free from it. They may well be said to mistake the whole nature of wisdom, who do not think it desirable to be always wise. He has not learned the nature of piety, who thinks it too much to be pious in all his actions. He

does not sufficiently understand what reason is, who does not earnestly desire to live in every thing according to it.

If we had a religion that consisted in absurd superstitions, that had no regard to the perfection of our nature, people might well be glad to have some part of their life excused from it. But as the religion of the gospel is only the refinement and exaltation of our best faculties, as it only requires a life of the highest reason, as it only requires us to use this world as in reason it ought to be used, to live in such tempers as are the glory of intelligent beings, to walk in such wisdom as exalts our nature, and to practice such piety, as will raise us to God; who can think it grievous, to live always in the spirit of such a religion, to have every part of his life full of it, but he that would think it much more grievous, to be as the angels of God in heaven?

It is an immutable law of God, that all rational beings should act reasonably; not at this time, or in that place, or in the use of some particular thing, but at all times, in all places, and in the use of all things. This is a law that is as unchangeable as God, and can no more cease to be, than God can cease to be a God of wisdom and order. When therefore any being that is endued with reason does an unreasonable thing at any time, or in any place, or in the use of any thing, it sins against the great law of its nature, and against God the author of that nature.

They therefore, who plead for indulgences and vanities, for any foolish fashions, customs and humors of the world, or for the misuse of our time or money, plead for a rebellion against our nature, and a rebellion against God.

When therefore you are guilty of any folly or extravagance, or indulge any vain temper, do not consider it as a small matter, because it may seem so, if compared to some other sins; but consider it as it is, acting contrary to your nature, and then you will see that there is nothing small that is unreasonable. Because all unreasonable ways are contrary to the nature of all rational beings, whether men or angels. Neither of which can be any longer agreeable to God, than so far as they act according to the reason and excellence of their nature.

The infirmities of human life make such food and raiment necessary for us, as angels do not want: but then it is no more allowable for us to turn these necessities into follies, and indulge ourselves in the luxury of food, or the vanities of dress, than it is allowable for angels to act below the dignity of their proper state. For a reasonable life, and a wise use of our proper condition, is as much the duty of all men, as it is the duty of all angels and intelligent beings. These are not speculative flights, or imaginary notions, but are plain and undeniable laws, that are founded in the nature of rational beings, who as such are obliged to live by reason, and

glorify God by a continual right use of their several talents and faculties. So that though men are not angels, yet they may know for what ends, and by what rules men are to live and act, by considering the state and perfection of angels. Our blessed Savior has plainly turned our thoughts this way, by making this petition a constant part of all our prayers, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." A plain proof that the obedience of men, is to imitate the obedience of angels, and that rational beings on earth, are to live unto God, as rational beings in heaven live unto him.

When therefore you would represent to your mind, how Christians ought to live unto God, and in what degrees of wisdom and holiness they ought to use the things of this life; you must not look at the world, but you must look up to God and the society of angels, and think what wisdom and holiness is fit to prepare you for such a state of glory; you must look to all the highest precepts of the gospel; you must examine yourself by the spirit of Christ; you must think how the wisest men in the world have lived; you must think how departed souls would live, if they were again to act the short part of human life; you must think what degrees of wisdom and holiness you will wish for, when your are leaving the world.

Now this is not over-straining the matter, or proposing to ourselves any needless perfec-

tion. It is but bravely complying with the apostle's advice, where he says, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." For no one can come near the doctrine of this passage, but he that proposes to himself to do every thing in this life as a servant of God, to live by reason in every thing that he does, and to make the wisdom and holiness of the gospel, the rule and measure of his desiring and using every gift of God.

CHAP. VI.

THE GREAT OBLIGATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF MAKING A WISE AND RELIGIOUS USE OF OUR ESTATES.

As the holiness of Christianity consecrates all states and employments of life unto God, as it requires us to aspire after universal obedience, doing and using every thing as the servants of God, so are we more especially obliged to observe this religious exactness, in the use of our estates and fortunes.

The reason of this would appear very plain, if we were only to consider, that our estate is as much the gift of God, as our eyes, or our hands, and is no more to be thrown away, than

we are to put out our eyes, or throw away our limbs.

But besides this consideration, there are several other important reasons, why we should be religiously exact in the use of our estates.

1st. Because the manner of using our money, or spending our estate, enters so far into the business of every day, that our common life must be much of the same nature, as our common way of spending our estate. If reason and religion govern us in this, then reason and religion have got great hold of us; but if humor, pride and fancy, are the measures of our spending our estates, then humor, pride and fancy, will have the direction of the greatest part of our life.

2d. Another great reason for devoting all our estate to right uses, is this, because it is capable of being used to the most excellent purposes. If we waste it, we do not waste a trifle, but we waste that which might be made as eyes to the blind, as a husband to the widow, as a father to the orphan. We waste that, which not only enables us to minister worldly comforts to those who are in distress, but that which might purchase for ourselves everlasting treasures in heaven.* So that if we part with our money in foolish ways, we part with a great power of

* The author here alludes to the reward of *grace*, not of *debt*, which is promised to those who religiously improve their talents on earth; seeing we are finally to receive "according to the deeds done in the body."—Ed.

comforting our fellow-creatures, and of making ourselves more blessed. If there be nothing so glorious as doing good, if there be nothing that makes us so like God, then nothing can be so glorious in the use of our money, as to use it in works of love and goodness, making ourselves friends, fathers, benefactors, to all our fellow creatures, imitating the divine love, and turning all our power into acts of generosity, care and kindness, to such as are in need of it.

If a man had eyes, hands, and feet, that he could give to those who wanted them; if he should either lock them up in a chest, or please himself with some needless or ridiculous use of them, instead of giving them to his brethren who were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather choose to amuse himself with furnishing his house with those things, than to entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad? Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet; if we lock it up in chests, or waste it in needless expenses upon ourselves, while the distressed want it for their necessary uses; if we consume it in the ridiculous ornaments of apparel, while others are starving in nakedness, we are not far from the cruelty of him that chooses rather to adorn his house with hands and eyes, than to give

them to those that want them. If we choose to indulge ourselves in such enjoyments, as have no real use in them, and satisfy no real want, rather than to obtain an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness, that chooses to lock up eyes and hands, rather than to make himself for ever blessed, by giving them to those that want them.

After we have satisfied our sober and reasonable wants, all the rest of our money is but like spare eyes, or hands; it is something that we cannot keep to ourselves, without being foolish in the use of it, something that can only be used well, by giving it to those who want it.

3d. If we waste our money, we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us—we are not only guilty of making that useless, which is so powerful a means of doing good, but we do ourselves this farther harm, that we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves. Because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some unreasonable desires, in conforming to those fashions of the world, which, as Christians, we are obliged to renounce.

Wit and fine parts cannot be trifled away and only lost, but will expose those that have them into greater follies. So money, if not used strictly according to reason and religion, cannot only be trifled away, but it will betray us into

To waste money is to hurt ourselves.

greater follies, and make us live a more silly and extravagant life. If, therefore, you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You will act like a man who should refuse to give that as a cordial to a sick friend, which he could not drink himself without inflaming his blood. Superfluous money, if given to those that want it, is a cordial; if spent upon yourself, in something that you do not want, it only disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

Consider again the forementioned comparison. If the man that would not make a right use of spare eyes and hands, should, by continually trying to use them himself, spoil his own eyes and hands, we might justly accuse him of still greater madness. Now this is truly the case of riches spent upon ourselves in vain and needless expenses. In trying to use them where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, nourishing ill tempers, indulging our passions, and supporting a worldly mind. High eating and drinking, fine clothes, and houses, and equipage, gay pleasures, and diversions, do all naturally hurt and disorder our hearts. They are the nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature, and certain means to make us vain and worldly. They all support something that ought not to be support-

ed; and are contrary to that sobriety which relishes divine things. They are like so many weights upon our minds, that make us less able, and less inclined to raise our thoughts and affections to things above. So much as is spent in the vanity of dress, may be reckoned laid out to fix vanity in our minds. So much as is laid out for idle indulgence, may be reckoned given to render our hearts sensual. So much as is spent in state and equipage, may be reckoned as spent to dazzle your own eyes, and render you the idol of your own imagination. So in every thing, when you go from reasonable wants, you only support some unreasonable temper.

Thus, on all accounts, whether we consider our fortune as a talent and trust from God, or the great good that it enables us to do, or the great harm that it does to ourselves, if idly spent; it appears that it is absolutely necessary, to make reason and religion the strict rule of using our fortune.

Every exhortation in Scripture to be wise and reasonable, satisfying only such wants as God would have satisfied—every exhortation to be spiritual, pressing after a glorious change of our nature—every exhortation to love our neighbor as ourselves, to love all mankind as God has loved them, is a command to be strictly religious in the use of money. These tempers, and this use of worldly goods, is so much the doctrine of

all the New Testament, that you cannot read a chapter, without being taught something of it. I shall only produce one remarkable pas sage, which is sufficient to justify all that I have said concerning this religious use of all our for tune. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

I have quoted this passage at length, because

if one looks at the way of the world, one would hardly think that Christians had ever read this part of Scripture. Some people, even of those who may be reckoned virtuous Christians, look upon this text only as a general recommendation of occasional works of charity; whereas it shows the necessity not only of occasional charities, but of such an entire charitable life, as is a continual exercise of all such works of charity as we are able to perform.

You own that you have no title to salvation, if you have neglected these good works; because such persons as have neglected them, are at the last day to be placed on the left hand, and banished with a "Depart, ye cursed." There is, therefore, no salvation but in the performance of these good works; for "faith without works is dead." Who is it, therefore, that may be said to have performed these good works? Is it he that has sometimes assisted a prisoner, or relieved the poor or sick? This would be as absurd, as to say, that he had performed the duties of devotion, who had sometimes said his prayers. Is it he that has several times done these works of charity? This can no more be said, than he can be said to be the truly just man, who had done acts of justice several times.

What is the rule, therefore, or measure of performing these good works? How shall a man trust that he performs them as he ought? The rule is very plain and easy, and such as

A plain rule. A plain reason.

is common to every other virtue, as well as to charity. Who is the humble, or meek, or devout, or just, or faithful man? Is it he that has several times done acts of humility, meekness, devotion, justice, or fidelity? No. But it is he that lives in the habitual exercise of these virtues. So he only can be said to have performed these works of charity, who lives in the habitual exercise of them to the utmost of his power.

The reason of all this is very plain, because there is the same goodness, the same excellency, and the same necessity of being thus charitable at one time, as at another. That which is a reason for a charitable action, is as good a reason for a charitable life. That which is a reason for forgiving one offence, is the same reason for forgiving all offences. For such charity has nothing to recommend it to day, but what will be the same recommendation of it to morrow. You cannot neglect it at one time, without being guilty of the same sin, as if you neglected it another time.

If therefore it be our duty at any time to deny ourselves any needless expenses, to be moderate and frugal, that we may have to give to those that want, it is as much our duty to do so at all times, that we may be able to do more. If it is at any time a sin to prefer needless expense, to works of charity, it is so at all times: because charity as much excels needless and vain expense, at one time as at another.

Either therefore you must so far renounce

your Christianity, as to say, that you need never perform any good works; or you must own, that you are to perform them all your life in as high a degree as you are able. There is no middle way, any more than there is a middle way between pride and humility, or temperance and intemperance. If you do not strive to fulfil all charitable works, if you neglect any of them that are in your power, let it be when it will, or where it will, you number yourself among those that want Christian charity. Because it is as much your duty to do good with all that you have, and to live in the continual exercise of good works, as it is your duty to be temperate in all that you eat and drink.

Hence also appears the necessity of renouncing all those foolish and unreasonable expenses, which the pride and folly of mankind has made so common and fashionable in the world. If it is necessary to do good works as far as you are able, it must be as necessary to renounce those needless ways of spending money, which render you unable to do them.

You must therefore no more conform to the ways of the world, than you must conform to the vices of the world. You must no more spend with those that idly waste their money, than you must drink with the drunken, or indulge yourself with the epicure. A course of such expenses is no more consistent with a life of charity, than excess in drinking is consistent with a life of sobriety.

CHAP. VII.

THE IMPRUDENT USE OF AN ESTATE, REPRESENTED IN THE CHARACTER OF FLAVIA.

It has been observed, that a prudent and religious care is to be used, in the manner of spending our money, because it makes so great a part of our common life, and is so much the business of every day, that according as we are wise, or imprudent, in this respect, the whole course of our lives, will be rendered either very wise, or very full of folly.

Persons that are well affected to religion, that receive instructions of piety with pleasure and satisfaction, often wonder how it comes to pass that they make no greater progress in that religion which they so much admire.

Now the reason of it is this: religion lives only in their head; something else has possession of their hearts. Therefore they continue from year to year mere admirers, and praisers of piety, without ever coming up to the reality and perfection of its precepts. If it be asked why religion does not get possession of their hearts, the reason is, not because they live in gross sins, for their regard to religion preserves them from such disorders: But because their hearts are constantly kept in a wrong state, by the indiscreet use of such things as are lawful to be used.

The use and enjoyment of their estates is law-

ful, and therefore it never comes into their heads to imagine any great danger from that quarter. They never reflect, that there is a vain, and imprudent use of their estates, which though it does not destroy like gross sins, yet so disorders the heart, as makes it incapable of receiving the life and spirit of piety.

Our souls may receive an infinite hurt, and be rendered incapable of all virtue, merely by the use of innocent and lawful things. Nothing is more innocent than rest. And yet what more dangerous, than sloth? Nothing is more lawful than eating and drinking. And yet what more destructive of all virtue, what more fruitful of all vice, than sensuality? The care of a family is lawful and praise-worthy. And yet how are many people rendered incapable of all virtue, by a worldly and solicitous temper?

It is for want of religious exactness in the use of such innocent and lawful things, that religion cannot get possession of our hearts. And it is in the right and prudent management of ourselves, as to these things, that the art of holy living chiefly consists.

Gross sins are plainly seen, and easily avoided by persons that profess religion. But the indiscreet and dangerous use of innocent and lawful things, as it does not shock and offend our conscience, so it is difficult to make people at all sensible of the danger of it. A gentleman who spends all his estate in sports, and a woman that

lays out all her fortune upon herself, can hardly be persuaded that the spirit of religion cannot subsist in such a way of life.

A woman who loves dress, and thinks no expense too great to bestow upon the adorning of her person, cannot stop there. That temper draws a thousand other follies along with it, and will render the whole course of her life, her business, her conversation, her hopes, her fears, her taste, her pleasures, and diversions, all suitable to it.

Flavia and *Miranda* are two maiden sisters, who have each of them two hundred pounds a year. They buried their parents twenty years ago, and have since that time spent their estate as they pleased.

Flavia has been the wonder of all her friends, for her excellent management, in making so surprising a figure on so moderate a fortune. Several ladies that have twice her fortune, are not able always to be so genteel, and so constant at all places of pleasure and expense. She has every thing that is in the fashion, and is in every place where there is any diversion. Flavia is very orthodox; she talks warmly against heretics, and schismatics, is generally at church, and often at the sacrament. She once commended a sermon that was against the pride and vanity of dress, and thought it was very just against Lucinda, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need to be. If any one asks Flavia to

do something in charity, if she likes the person who makes the proposal, or happens to be in a right temper, she will give him half a crown, or a crown, and tell him, if he knew what a long milliner's bill she had just received, he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this, she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity; she thinks the man preaches well, that it is a very proper subject, that people want much to be put in mind of it; but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago, when she could so ill spare it. As for poor people, she will admit of no complaints from them; she is very positive they are all cheats and liars, and will say any thing to get relief, and therefore it must be a sin to encourage them in their evil ways. You would think Flavia had the tenderest conscience in the world, if you was to see how scrupulous and apprehensive she is of the guilt and danger of giving amiss.

She buys all books of wit and humor, and has made an expensive collection of English Poets. For, she says, one cannot have a true taste of any of them, without being very conversant with them all. She will sometimes read a book of piety, if it is a short one, and is much commended for style and language, and she can tell where to borrow it.

Flavia would be a miracle of piety, if she was but half so careful of her soul as she is of

her body. The rising of a pimple in her face, or the sting of a gnat, will make her keep her room, and she thinks they are very rash people, that do not take care of things in time. This makes her so careful of her health, that she never thinks she is well enough; and so indulgent, that she never can be really well. So that it costs her a great deal in sleeping-draughts, and waking-draughts, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

If you visit Flavia on the Sunday, you will always meet good company, you will know what is doing in the world, you will hear the last lampoon, be told who wrote it, and who is meant by every name that is in it. You will hear what plays were acted that week, which is the finest song in the opera, who was intolerable at the last assembly; and what games are most in fashion. Flavia thinks they are atheists that play at cards on the Sunday, but she will tell you the nicety of all the games, what cards she held, how she played them, and the history of all that happened at play, as soon as she comes from church. If you would know who is rude and ill-natured, who is vain and foppish, who lives too high, and who is in debt—if you would know what is the quarrel at a certain house, or who are in love—if you would know how late Belinda comes home at night, what clothes she has bought, how she loves compliments, and

what a long story she told at such a place—if you would know how cross Lucius is to his wife, what ill-natured things he says to her when nobody hears him—if you would know how they hate one another in their hearts, though they appear so kind in public; you must visit Flavia on the Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the day, that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house, as a profane wretch, for having been found once mending her clothes on the Sunday night.

Thus lives Flavia; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent about fifteen hundred and sixty Sundays after this manner. She will have worn about two hundred different suits of clothes. Out of this thirty years of her life, fifteen of them will have been disposed of in bed; and of the remaining fifteen, about fourteen will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, conversation, reading and hearing plays and romances, at operas, assemblies, balls and diversions. For you may reckon all the time she is up, thus spent, except about an hour and a half, that is disposed of at church, most Sundays in the year. With great management and under mighty rules of economy, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds upon herself, bating only some shillings, crowns, or half-crowns, that have gone from her in accidental charities.

I shall not take upon me to say, that it is

impossible for Flavia to be saved; but thus much must be said, that she has no grounds from Scripture to think she is in the way of salvation. Her whole life is in direct opposition to all those tempers and practices, which the gospel has made necessary to salvation.

If you was to hear her say, that she had lived all her life like Anne the prophetess, "who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," you would look upon her as very extravagant. Yet this would be no greater extravagance, than for her to say, that she had been "striving to enter in at the strait gate," or making any one doctrine of the gospel, a rule of her life.

She may as well say, that she lived with our Saviour when he was upon earth, as that she has lived in imitation of him, or made it any part of her care to live in such tempers, as he required of all those that would be his disciples. She may as truly say, that she has every day washed the saint's feet, as that she has lived in Christian humility, and poverty of spirit; and as reasonably think, that she has taught a charity-school, as that she has lived in works of charity. She has as much reason to think, that she has been a sentinel in an army, as that she has lived in watching and self-denial. And it may as fairly be said, that she lived by the labor of her hands, as that she had "given all diligence to make her calling and election sure."

And here it is well to be observed, that the poor, vain turn of mind, the irreligion, the folly and vanity of this whole life of Flavia, is all owing to the manner of using her estate. It is this that has formed her spirit, that has given life to every idle temper, that has supported every trifling passion, and kept her from all thoughts of a prudent, useful, and devout life. When her parents died, she had no thought about her two hundred pounds a year, but that she had so much money to do what she would with, to spend upon herself, and purchase the pleasures and gratifications of all her passions.

It was no wonder that she should turn her time, her mind, her health and strength to the same uses that she turned her fortune. It is owing to her being wrong in so great an article of life, that you can see nothing wise, or reasonable, or pious, in any other part of it.

Though the irregular trifling spirit of this character belongs, I hope, but to few people, yet many may learn instruction from it, and perhaps see something of their own spirit in it. As Flavia seems to be undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune, so the lowness of most people's virtue, the imperfections of their piety, and the disorders of their passions, is generally owing to their imprudent use and enjoyment of lawful and innocent things.

More people are kept from a true sense and state of religion by a regular kind of sensuality

and indulgence, than by gross drunkenness. More men live regardless of the great duties of piety, through too great a concern for worldly goods, than through direct injustice.

As consideration is the only eye of the soul, as the truths of religion can be seen by nothing else, so whatever raises a levity of mind, a trifling spirit, renders the soul incapable of seeing, apprehending, and relishing the doctrines of piety. Would we therefore make a real progress in religion, we must not only abhor gross and notorious sins, but we must regulate the lawful parts of our behavior, and put the most common and allowed actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety.

CHAP VIII.

THE WISE AND PIOUS USE OF AN ESTATE, NATURALLY CARRIETH US TO GREAT PERFECTION IN ALL THE VIRTUES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE; REPRESENTED IN THE CHARACTER OF MIRANDA.

Any one pious regularity of any one part of our life, is of great advantage, not only on its own account, but as it uses us to live by rule, and think of the government of ourselves.

A man of business, that has brought one part of his affairs under certain rules, is in a fair way to take the same care of the rest.

The advantage of exactness in any one thing.

So he that has brought any one part of his life under the rules of religion, may thence be taught to extend the same order and regularity into all other parts of his life.

If any one is so wise as to think his time too precious to be disposed of by chance, and left to be devoured by any thing that happens in his way; if he lays himself under a necessity of observing how every day goes through his hands, and obliges himself to a certain order of time in his business, his retirements, and devotions, it is hardly to be imagined, how soon such a conduct would reform, improve, and perfect the whole course of his life.

He that once knows the value, and reaps the advantage of well-ordered time, will not long be a stranger to the value of any thing else that is of any real concern to him.

A rule that relates even to the smallest part of our life, is of great benefit to us, merely as it is a rule. For, as the proverb saith, "he that has begun well, has half done:" so he that has begun to live by rule, has gone a great way towards the perfection of his life.

By rule, must here be constantly understood, a religious rule, observed upon a principle of duty to God. For if a man should oblige himself to be moderate in his meals, only in regard to his stomach; or abstain from drinking, only to avoid the headache; or be moderate in his sleep, through fear of a lethargy,

he might be exact in these rules, without being at all the better man for them.

But when he is moderate and regular in any of these things, out of a sense of Christian sobriety, and self-denial, that he may offer unto God a more reasonable and holy life, then it is that the smallest rule of this kind, is naturally, the beginning of great piety.

For the smallest rule in these matters is of great benefit, as it teaches us some part of the government of ourselves, as it keeps up a tenderness of mind, as it presents God often to our thoughts, and brings a sense of religion into the ordinary actions of our common life.

If a man, whenever he was in company, where any one swore, talked lewdly, or spoke evil of his neighbor, should make it a rule to himself, either gently to reprove him, or if that was not proper, then to leave the company as decently as he could; he would find, that this little rule, like a little leaven hid in a great quantity of meal, would spread and extend itself through the whole form of his life.

It would be easy to show in many other instances, how little and small matters are the first steps, and natural beginnings of great perfection.

But the two things, which of all others most need to be under a strict rule, and which are the greatest blessings both to ourselves and others, when they are rightly used, are our time,

and our money. These talents are continual means and opportunities of doing good.

He that is piously strict, and exact in the wise management of either of these, cannot be long ignorant of the right use of the other. And he that is happy in the religious care and disposal of them both, is already ascended several steps upon the ladder of Christian perfection.

Miranda, (the sister of Flavia) is a sober, reasonable Christian. As soon as she was mistress of her time and fortune, it was her first thought how she might best fulfil every thing that God required of her in the use of them, and how she might make the best and happiest use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord hath said, "that there is but one thing needful," and therefore makes her whole life but one continual labor after it. She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking or not liking any thing, and that is the will of God. She is not so weak as to pretend to add, what is called the fine lady, to the true Christian; Miranda thinks too well to be taken with the sound of such silly words. She has renounced the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly affections; and that is Miranda's good breeding.

While she was under her mother, she was forced to be genteel, to live in ceremony, to sit up late at nights, to be in the folly of every

fashion, and often visiting on Sundays; to go loaded with finery, to be in every polite conversation, to hear profaneness at the playhouse, and wanton songs and love intrigues at the opera, to dance at public places, that fops and rakes might admire the fineness of her shape, and the beauty of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life, is always a matter of sorrow to her now.

Miranda does not divide her duty between God, her neighbor, and herself, but she considers all as due to God, and so does every thing in his name, and for his sake. This makes her consider her fortune as the gift of God, that is to be used as every thing is, that belongs to God, for the wise and reasonable ends of a Christian and holy life. She thinks it the same folly to indulge herself in vain expenses, as to give to other people to spend in the same way. It is a folly and a crime in a poor man, says Miranda, to waste what is given him, in foolish trifles, while he wants meat, drink, and clothes. And is it less folly, or a less crime in me to spend that money in silly diversions, which might be so much better spent in imitation of the divine goodness, in works of kindness and charity towards my fellow creatures, and fellow Christians? If a poor man's own necessities are a reason why he should not waste any of his money idly, surely the necessities of the poor, the excellency of charity, which is received as

done to Christ himself, is a much greater reason why no one should ever waste any of his money. For if he does so, he not only like the poor man, wastes that which he wants himself, but he wastes that which is wanted for the most noble use, and which Christ himself is ready to receive at his hands. And if we are angry at a poor man, and look upon him as a wretch, when he throws away that which should buy his own bread; how must we appear in the sight of God, if we make a wanton, idle use of that which would buy bread and clothes for the hungry and naked brethren, who are as near and dear to God as we are, and fellow heirs of the same state of future glory?

Excepting her victuals, she never spent ten pounds a year upon herself. If you was to see her, you would wonder who it was that was so surprisingly neat and clean. She has but one rule that she observes in her dress, to be always clean and in cheap things. Every thing about her resembles the purity of her soul, and she is always clean without, because she is always pure within.

Every morning sees her early at her prayers; she rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins all her pious rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be as a guardian angel to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers blessing the place where she dwells, and

making intercession with God for those that are asleep.

When you see her at work, you see the same wisdom governing all her other actions; she is either doing something that is necessary for herself or necessary for others. Her wise and pious mind, neither wants the amusement, nor can bear with the folly of idle and impertinent work. She can admit of no such folly as this is in the day, because she is to answer for all her actions at night. When there is no wisdom to be observed in the employment of her hands, when there is no useful or charitable work to be done, Miranda will work no more. At her table she lives strictly by this rule of holy Scripture, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

If Miranda was to run a race for her life, she would submit to a diet that was proper for it. But as the race which is set before her, is a race of holiness, purity, and heavenly affection, which she is to finish in a corrupt, disordered body of earthly passions, so her every day diet has only this one end, to make her body fitter for this spiritual race. She does not weigh her meat in a pair of scales, but she weighs it in a much better balance; allowing herself so much as gives a proper strength to her body, and renders it able and willing to obey the soul. So that Miranda will never have her eyes swell with fatness, or pant under a

heavy load of flesh, till she has changed her religion.

The holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, are her daily study. These she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon herself, and trying herself by every doctrine that is there. When she has the New Testament in her hand, she supposes herself at the feet of our Savior and his apostles, and makes every thing that she learns of them, so many laws of her life. She receives their sacred words with as much attention, and reverence, as if she saw their persons, and knew that they were just come from heaven, on purpose to teach her the way that leads to it.

She thinks, that the trying herself every day by the doctrines of Scripture, is the only possible way to be ready for her trial at the last day. She is sometimes afraid that she lays out too much money in books, because she cannot forbear buying all practical books of any note; especially such as enter into the heart of religion, and describe the inward holiness of the Christian life. But of all human writings, the lives of pious persons, of eminent saints, are her greatest delight. In these she searches as for hidden treasure, hoping to find some secret of holy living, some uncommon degree of piety, which she may make her own. By this means Miranda has her head and heart stored with all the principles of wisdom and holiness; she is so

full of the one main business of life, that she finds it difficult to converse upon any other subject; and if you are in her company, when she thinks proper to talk, you must be made wiser and better, whether you will or not.

Miranda is a constant relief to poor people in their misfortunes and accidents. There are sometimes little misfortunes that happen to them, which of themselves they could never be able to overcome. The death of a cow, or a horse, or some little robbery, would keep them in distress all their lives. She does not suffer them to grieve under such accidents as these. She immediately repairs their loss, and makes use of it as a means of raising their minds towards God.

Miranda considers, that Lazarus was a common beggar, that he was the care of angels, and carried into Abraham's bosom. She considers that our blessed Savior, and his apostles, were kind to beggars; that they spoke comfortably to them, healed their diseases, and restored eyes and limbs to the lame and blind. That Peter said to the beggar that wanted an alms for him, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Miranda, therefore, never treats beggars with disregard and aversion, but she imitates the kindness of our Savior and his apostles; and though she cannot work miracles for their relief, yet she examines

their case and relieves them with that power that she hath.

It may be, says Miranda, that I may often give to those who do not deserve it, or who will make an ill use of my alms. But what then? Is not this the very method of divine goodness? Does not God make "his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good?" Is not this the very goodness that is recommended to us in Scripture, that by imitating of it, we may be children of our Father who is in heaven, "who sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust?" And shall I withhold a little money or food, from my fellow creature, for fear he should not be good enough to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to his own great goodness; and shall I be so absurd, as to withhold my charity from a poor brother, because he may perhaps not deserve it? Shall I use a measure towards him, which I pray God never to use towards me?

Beside, where have the Scriptures made merit the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, they say, "If thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."*

* It will be observed that no notice is here taken of those more expansive charities which regard the *souls* of men, and bless the world with Bibles, Tracts, Sunday Schools, and Missionaries. These glorious enterprises did not, in our Author's day, engage the attention of Christians. Had he lived in these times, the devout and enlightened principles he here inculcates, and which shone so conspicuously in his life, would have made him one of their foremost advocates.—Ed.

Summary of Miranda's life.

This is the spirit, and this is the life of the devout Miranda; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent six thousand pounds in charity, for that which she allows herself, may fairly be reckoned among her alms.

When she dies, she must shine among apostles, and saints, and martyrs, she must stand among the first servants of God, and be glorious among those that have fought the good fight, and finished their course with joy.

CHAP. IX.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF MIRANDA, ESPECIALLY ON PROPRIETY OF DRESS.

Now this life of Miranda, which I heartily recommend to the imitation of her sex, however contrary it may seem to the way and fashion of the world, is yet suitable to the true spirit, and founded upon the plainest doctrines of Christianity.

To live as she does, is as truly suitable to the gospel of Christ, as to be baptized or receive the Lord's supper.

Her spirit is that which animated the saints of former ages; and it is because they lived as she does, that we now celebrate their memories, and praise God for their examples.

There is nothing that is whimsical, trifling, or

unreasonable in her character; but every thing there described, is a right and proper instance of solid and real piety.

It is as easy to show, that it is whimsical to go to church, or to offer one's prayers, as that it is whimsical to observe any of these rules of life. For all Miranda's rules of living unto God, of spending her time and fortune, of eating, working, dressing and conversing, are as substantial parts of a reasonable and holy life, as devotion and prayer.

There is nothing to be said for the wisdom of sobriety, the wisdom of devotion, the wisdom of charity, or the wisdom of humility, but what is as good an argument for the wise and reasonable use of apparel.

Neither can any thing be said against the folly of luxury, extravagance, prodigality, ambition, idleness, or indulgence, but what must be said against the folly of dress. Religion is as deeply concerned in the one as in the other. If you may be vain in one thing, you may be vain in every thing; for one kind of vanity only differs from another, as one kind of intemperance differs from another.

If you spend your fortune in the needless, vain finery of dress, you cannot condemn prodigality, or extravagance, or luxury, without condemning yourself.

If you fancy that it is your only folly, and that therefore there can be no great matter in it; you

are like those that think they are only guilty of the folly of covetousness, or the folly of ambition. Now though some people may live so plausible a life, as to appear chargeable with no other fault, than that of covetousness or ambition; yet the case is not as it appears; for covetousness or ambition cannot subsist in a heart that is in other respects rightly devoted to God.

In like manner, though some people may spend most that they have in needless, expensive ornaments of dress, and yet seem to be in every other respect truly pious, yet it is certainly false; for it is as impossible for a mind that is in a true state of religion, to be vain in the use of clothes, as to be vain in the use of alms, or devotions. Now to convince you of this from your own reflections, let us suppose that some eminent saint, as, for instance, that the Virgin Mary was sent into the world, to be again in a state of trial for a few years, and that you were going to her, to be edified by her great piety; would you expect to find her dressed out and adorned in fine and expensive clothes? No: you would know in your own mind, that it was as impossible, as to find her learning to dance. Do but add saint, or holy, to any person, either man or woman, and your own mind tells you immediately, that such a character cannot admit of the vanity of fine apparel.

Now what is the reason, that when you think of a saint or eminent servant of God, you cannot

admit of the vanity of apparel? Is it not because it is inconsistent with such a right state of heart, such true and exalted piety? And is not this therefore a demonstration, that where such vanity is admitted, there a right state of heart, true and exalted piety must needs be wanted? For as certainly as the holy Virgin Mary could not indulge herself, or conform to the vanity of the world in dress and figure; so certain is it, that none can indulge themselves in this vanity, but those who want her piety of heart; and consequently it must be owned, that all needless and expensive finery of dress, is the effect of a disordered heart, that is not governed by the true spirit of religion.

Covetousness is not a crime, because there is any harm in gold or silver, but because it is a foolish and unreasonable state of mind. In like manner, expensive finery of dress, is not a crime, because there is any good or evil in clothes, but because expensive ornaments shows a foolish and unreasonable state of heart, that abuses clothing, and turns the necessities of life into so many instances of pride and folly. All the world agree in condemning fops. Is it because there is any thing sinful in their particular dress? No: but it is because it shows the state of a man's mind, and that it is impossible for so ridiculous an outside to have any thing wise or reasonable, or good within. To suppose a fop of great piety, is as much nonsense, as to suppose a

Clothes indicate the state of a man's mind.

coward of great courage. So that all the world agree that the use and manner of clothes is a mark of the state of a man's mind, and consequently, that it is a thing highly essential to religion.

But it should be well considered, that as it is not only the sot that is guilty of intemperance, but every one that transgresses the right measure of eating and drinking; so it should be considered, that it is not only the fop that is guilty of the abuse of dress, but every one that departs from the reasonable and religious ends of clothing. Therefore every argument against sottishness, is as good an argument against all kinds of intemperance; so every argument against the vanity of fops, is as good an argument against all vanity and abuse of dress. For they are all of the same kind, and only differ, as one degree of intemperance may differ from another. She that only paints a little, may as justly accuse another, because she paints a great deal, as she that uses but a common finery of dress, accuses another that is excessive in her finery.

As in the matter of temperance, there is no rule but the sobriety that is according to the doctrines and spirit of our religion: so in the matter of apparel, there is no rule to be observed, but such a right use of clothes, as is strictly according to the doctrines and spirit of our religion. To pretend to make the way of the world our measure in these things, is as weak and absurd,

as to make the way of the world the measure of our sobriety, abstinence, or humility. It is a pretence that is exceedingly absurd in the mouths of Christians, who are to be so far from conforming to the fashions of this life, that to have overcome the world, is made an essential mark of Christianity.

This therefore is the way that you are to judge of the crime of vain apparel: you are to consider it an offence against the proper use of clothes, as covetousness is an offence against the proper use of money. You are to consider it as an indulgence of proud and unreasonable tempers; as an offence against the humility and sobriety of the Christian spirit; as an offence against all those doctrines that require you to do all to the glory of God, and that require you to make a right use of your talents. You are to consider it as an offence against all those texts of Scripture, that command you to love your neighbor as yourself, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and do all works of charity that you are able. So that you must not deceive yourself with saying, where can be the harm of clothes? The covetous man might as well say, where can be the harm of gold or silver? You must consider, that it is a great deal of harm to want that wise, and reasonable, and humble state of heart, which is according to the spirit of religion, and which no one can have in the manner that he ought to

The right rule.	Exceptions claimed.

have it, who indulges himself either in the vanity of dress, or the desire of riches.

There is therefore nothing right in the use of clothes, or in the use of any thing else, but the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel. Every other use of things (however polite and fashionable in the world) distracts and disorders the heart, and is inconsistent with that purity of heart, that wisdom of mind, and regularity of affection, which Christianity requires. If you would be a good Christian, there is but one way; you must live wholly to God, according to the wisdom that comes from God. You must act according to the right judgments of the nature and value of things. You must live in the exercise of heavenly affections, and use all the gifts of God to his praise and glory.

Some persons perhaps, who admire the purity and perfection of this life of Miranda, may say, how can it be proposed as a common example? How can we who are married, or we who are under the direction of our parents, imitate such a life?

It is answered, just as you may imitate the life of our blessed Savior and his apostles. The circumstances of our Savior's life, and the state and condition of his apostles, was more different from yours, than that of Miranda's is, and yet their life, the purity and perfection of their behavior, is the common example that is proposed to all Christians.

Act under God as they did; direct your common actions to that end which they did; glorify your proper state with such love of God, such charity to your neighbor, such humility and self-denial, as they did; and then, though you are only teaching your own children, and St. Paul is converting whole nations, yet you are following his steps, and acting after his example.

Do not think, therefore, that you cannot or need not be like Miranda, because you are not in her state of life. For as the same spirit and temper would have made Miranda a saint, though she had been forced to labor for a maintenance, so if you will but aspire after her spirit and temper, every form and condition of life will furnish you with sufficient means of employing it.

Miranda is what she is, because she does every thing in the name, and with regard to her duty to God; and when you do the same, you will be exactly like her, though you are never so different from her in the outward state of your life.

You are married, you say; therefore you have not your time and fortune in your power as she has. But Miranda's perfection does not consist in this, that she spends so much time, or so much money in a certain manner, but in that she is careful to make the best use of all that time, and fortune, which God has put into her hands. Do you, therefore, make the best use of all that

time and money which is in your disposal, and then you are like Miranda. If she has two hundred pounds a year, and you have only two mites, have you not the more reason to be exceeding exact in the wisest use of it? If she has a deal of time, and you have but a little, ought you not to be the more watchful and circumspect, lest that little should be lost?

You say if you was to imitate the cleanly plainness and cheapness of her dress, you should offend your husbands. Be very sure that this is true, before you make it an excuse.

Use your utmost endeavors to recommend yourselves to their affections by such solid virtues, as may correct the vanity of their minds, and teach them to love you for such qualities, as will make you amiable in the sight of God and his holy angels.

As to this doctrine concerning the plainness and modesty of dress, it may perhaps be thought by some to be sufficiently confuted by asking, whether all persons are to be clothed in the same manner?

These questions are generally put by those, who had rather perplex the plainest truths, than be obliged to follow them. Let it be supposed, that I had recommended an universal plainness of diet. Is it not a thing sufficiently reasonable to be universally recommended? But would it thence follow, that the nobleman and the laborer were to live upon the same food? Suppose I

had pressed an universal temperance! Does not religion sufficiently justify such a doctrine? But would it therefore follow, that all people were to drink the same liquors, and in the same quantity?

In like manner, though plainness and sobriety of dress is recommended to all, yet it does by no means follow, that all are to be clothed in the same manner.

Let every one but guard against the vanity of dress, let them but make their use of clothes a matter of conscience, let them but desire to make the best use of their money, and then every one has a rule that is sufficient to direct them in every state of life.

Will you say, that you may use the finest, richest wines, when and as you please, that you may be as expensive in them as you have a mind, because different liquors are allowed? If not, how can it be said, that you may use clothes as you please, and wear the richest things you can get, because the bare difference of clothes is lawful?

To ask what is vanity in dress, is no more a puzzling question, than to ask, what is intemperance. And though religion does not state the particular measure for all individuals, yet it gives such general rules as are a sufficient direction in every state of life.

He that thinks it a needless nicety, to talk of the religious use of apparel, has as much reason

to think it a needless nicety, to talk of the religious use of food and drink. Luxury and indulgence in dress, is as great an abuse, as luxury and indulgence in eating and drinking. There is no avoiding either of them, but by making religion the strict measure of our allowance in both cases. There is nothing in religion to excite a man to this pious exactness in one case, but what is as good a motive to the same exactness in the other.

All that has been here said to married women, may serve for the same instruction to such as are still under the direction of their parents. Though the obedience which is due to parents does not oblige them to carry their virtues any higher than their parents require them; yet their obedience requires them to submit to their direction in all things not contrary to the laws of God.

If, therefore, your parents require you to live more in the fashion and conversation of the world, or to be more expensive in your dress and person, or to dispose of your time otherwise than suits with your desires after greater perfection, you must submit, and bear it as your cross, till you are at liberty to follow the higher counsels of Christ, and have it in your power to choose the best ways of raising your virtue to its greatest height.

Now although whilst you are in this state, you may be obliged to forego some means of improving your virtue, yet there are some

others to be found in it, that are not to be had in a life of more liberty.

For if in this state, where obedience is so great a virtue, you comply in all things lawful, out of a pious, tender sense of duty; then those things which you thus perform, are, instead of being hinderances of your virtue, turned into means of improving it.

What you lose by being restrained from such things, as you would choose to observe, you gain by that excellent virtue of obedience, in humbly complying against your temper. Now what is here granted, is only in things lawful; and therefore the diversions of the stage is here excepted; being elsewhere proved, as I think, to be absolutely unlawful.

Thus much to show, how persons under the direction of others, may imitate the wise and pious life of Miranda.

But as for those who are altogether in their own hands, if the liberty of their states make them covet the best gifts, if it carries them to choose the most excellent ways, if they, having all in their own power, should turn the whole form of their life into a regular exercise of the highest virtues, happy are they who have so learned Christ!

CHAP. X.

ALL ORDERS, RANKS, AND AGES, ARE OBLIGED TO DEVOTE THEMSELVES UNTO GOD.

I HAVE in the foregoing chapters gone through several instances of Christian devotion, and shown that all the parts of common life, are to be made holy and acceptable unto God, by a wise and religious use of every thing, and by directing our actions and designs to such ends as are suitable to the honor and glory of God.

I shall now show, that this religious use of every thing we have, is the duty of all orders of Christian people.

Fulvius has had a learned education, and taken his degrees in the university; he came from thence, that he might be free from any rules of life. He takes no employment upon him, nor enters into any business, because he thinks that every employment or business, calls people to the careful performance and discharge of its several duties. When he is grave, he will tell you that he did not enter into the ministry, because he looks upon it to be a state that requires great holiness of life, and that it does not suit his temper to be so good. He will tell you that he never intends to marry, because he cannot oblige himself to that regularity of life, and good behavior, which he takes to be the duty of those that are at the head of a family. He

refused to be godfather to his nephew, because he will have no trust of any kind to answer for.

Fulvius thinks that he is conscientious in this conduct, and is therefore content with the most idle and careless life.

He has no religion, no devotion, no pretences to piety. He lives by no rules, and thinks all is very well, because he is neither a priest nor a father, nor a guardian, nor has any employment or family to look after.

But Fulvius is a rational creature, and as such, is as much obliged to live according to reason and order, as a priest is obliged to attend at the altar, or a guardian to be faithful to his trust. If he lives contrary to reason, he commits no small crime. He breaks not a small trust; but the law of nature. He rebels against God and puts himself among those whom the God of reason and order will punish as apostates and deserters.

No man must think himself excused from the exactness of piety, because he has chosen to be idle and independent in the world; for the necessities of a reasonable and holy life, are no. founded in the conditions and employments of this life, but in the immutable nature of God, and the nature of man. A man is not to be reasonable and holy, because he is a minister, or a father of a family; but he is to be a pious minister, and a good father, because piety and goodness are the laws of human nature. Could

any man please God, without living according to reason and order, there would be nothing displeasing to God in an idle minister, or a reprobate father. He therefore that abuses his reason, is like him that abuses the priesthood; and he that neglects the holiness of the Christian life, is as the man that disregards the most important trust.

If a man were to choose to put out his eyes rather than enjoy the light, and see the works of God; if he should voluntarily kill himself, by refusing to eat and drink, every one would own, that such a one was a rebel against God, that justly deserved his highest indignation. You would not say, that this was only sinful in a minister, or a master of a family, but in every man.

Let us suppose, that this man, instead of putting out his eyes, had only employed them in looking at ridiculous things, or shut them up in a sleep; that instead of starving himself to death, he should turn every meal into a feast, and eat and drink like an epicure. Could he be said to have lived more to the glory of God? could he any more be said to act the part for which God had created him?

Suppose a man acting unreasonably; suppose him extinguishing his reason, instead of putting out his eyes; and living in a course of folly and impertinence, instead of starving himself. Then you have found out as great a rebel against God.

For he that puts out his eyes, or murders himself, has only this guilt, that he abuses the powers that God has given him; refuses to act that part for which he was created, and puts himself into a state that is contrary to the divine will. And this is the guilt of every one that lives an unreasonable, unholy, and foolish life. As therefore, no particular state, is an excuse for the abuse of our bodies; so no particular state, is an excuse for the abuse of our reason, or the neglect of the holiness of the Christian religion. It is as much the will of God, that we should make the best use of our rational faculties, as it is that we should use our eyes, and eat and drink for the preservation of our lives.

Every body acknowledges, that all orders of men are to be equally and exactly honest and faithful. Now if we would but attend to the reason and nature of things; if we would but consider the nature of God, and the nature of man, we should find the same necessity for every other right use of our reason, for every grace, or religious temper of the Christian life. We should find it as absurd to suppose, that one man must be exact in piety, and another need not, as to suppose that one man must be exact in honesty, but another need not. For Christian humility, sobriety, devotion, and piety, are as necessary parts of a reasonable life, as justice and honesty. On the other hand, pride, sensuality, and covetousness, are as great disorders

of the soul, as high an abuse of our reason, and as contrary to God, as cheating and dishonesty

If you rather choose to be idle than unfaithful; if you prefer to live in sensuality, rather than to injure your neighbor, you have made no better a provision for the favor of God, than he that chooses rather to rob a house, than to rob a church. The abusing of our own nature, is as great a disobedience against God, as the injuring our neighbor; and he that wants piety towards God, has done as much to damn himself, as he that wants honesty towards men. Every argument that proves it necessary for all men, in all stations, to be truly honest, proves it equally necessary for all men, in all stations, to be truly pious.

Another argument to prove that all orders of men are obliged to be thus holy and devout in the common course of their lives, in the use of every thing that they enjoy, may be taken from our obligation to prayer. It is granted, that prayer is a duty that belongs to all states and conditions of men; now if we inquire into the reason of this, why no state of life is to be excused from prayer, we shall find it as good a reason, why every state of life is to be made a state of piety and holiness in all its parts. The reason why we pray to God, and praise him with hymns, is because we are to glorify him in all possible ways. It is not because the praises of words, are more particularly parts of piety, or

more the worship of God than other things; but it is because they are possible ways of expressing our dependence, our obedience and devotion to God. Now if this be the reason of verbal praises and thanksgivings to God, because we are to live unto God all possible ways, then it plainly follows, that we are equally obliged to worship, and glorify God in all other actions, that can be turned into acts of piety and obedience to him. And as actions are of much more significancy than words, it must be a much more acceptable worship of God, to glorify him in all the actions of our common life, than with any little form of words at any particular times.

Thus, if God is to be worshipped with thanksgiving, he that makes it a rule to be content and thankful in every part and accident of his life, because it comes from God, praises him in a much higher manner, than he that has some set time for singing psalms. He that dares not say an ill-natured word, or do an unreasonable thing, because he considers God as every where present, performs a better devotion than he that dares not miss the church. To live in the world as a stranger and a pilgrim, using all its enjoyments as if we used them not, making all our actions so many steps towards a better life, is offering a better sacrifice to God, than any forms of holy and heavenly prayers.

To be humble in all our actions, to avoid

every appearance of pride and vanity, to be meek and lowly in our words, dress, and designs, in imitation of our blessed Savior, is worshipping God in a higher manner, than they who have only set times to fall on their knees in devotion. He that contents himself with necessaries, that he may give the more to those that want; that dares not to spend any money foolishly, because he considers it as a talent from God, which must be used according to his will, praises God with something that is more glorious than songs of praise.

He that has appointed times for the use of wise and pious prayers, performs a proper instance of devotion; but he that allows himself no times, nor any places, nor any actions, but such as are strictly conformable to wisdom and holiness, worships the divine nature with the most true and substantial devotion. For who does not know, that it is better to be pure and holy, than to talk about purity and holiness?

Prayers are so far from being a sufficient devotion, that they are the smallest part of it. We are to praise God with words and prayers, because it is a possible way of glorifying God, who has given us such faculties, as may be so used. But as words are small things in themselves, and as times of prayer are but little, compared with the rest of our lives; so that devotion which consists in times and forms of prayer, is but a very small thing, if compared to

that devotion which is to appear in every part and circumstance of our lives.

Again; as it is an easy thing to worship God with forms of words, and to observe times of offering them unto him, so it is the smallest kind of piety. On the other hand, as it is more difficult to worship God with our substance, to honor him with the right use of our time, to offer to him the continual sacrifice of self-denial and mortification; as it requires more piety to eat and drink only for such ends as may glorify God, to undertake no labor, nor allow of any diversion, but where we can act in the name of God; as it is most difficult to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, correct all our passions, and make piety to God, the rule and measure of all the actions of all our common life, so the devotion of this kind is a much more acceptable service unto God, than those words of devotion which we offer to him either in the sanctuary or in our closet.

Every sober reader will easily perceive, that I intend not to lessen the true and great value of prayers, either public or private; but to show, that they are a very slender part of devotion, when compared to a devout life.

To see this in a yet clearer light, let us suppose a person to have appointed times for praising God with psalms and hymns, and to be strict in the observation of them; let it be supposed also, that in his common life he is restless and uneasy, full of murmurings and complaints at

every thing, never pleased but by chance, as his temper happens to carry him, but murmuring and repining at the very seasons, and having something to dislike in every thing that happens to him. Now can you conceive any thing more absurd and unreasonable, than such a character as this? Is such a one to be reckoned thankful to God, because he has forms of praise which he offers to him? Nay, is it not certain, that such forms of praise must be so far from being an acceptable devotion to God, that they must be abhored as an abomination? Now the absurdity which you see in this instance, is the same in any other part of our life; if our common life hath any contrariety to our prayers, it is the same abomination, as songs of thanksgiving in the mouths of murmurers. Bended knees, whilst you are clothed with pride; heavenly petitions, whilst you are hoarding up treasures upon earth; holy devotions, while you live in the follies of the world; prayers of meekness and charity, whilst your heart is the seat of spite and resentment; hours of prayer, whilst you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits, and foolish pleasures; are as absurd, unacceptable service to God, as forms of thanksgiving from a person that lives in repinings and discontent.

Unless the common course of our lives be according to the common spirit of our prayers, our prayers are so far from being a real or suffi-

cient degree of devotion, that they become empty lip-labor, or what is worse, notorious hypocrisy.

As certain therefore as the same holiness of prayers requires the same holiness of life, so certain is it, that all Christians are called to the same holiness of life. A soldier or a tradesman, is not called to preach the gospel; but every soldier or tradesman is as much obliged to be devout, humble, holy, and heavenly-minded in all the parts of his common life, as a clergyman is obliged to be faithful, and laborious in his profession.

All men, therefore, as men, have one and the same important business; to act up to the excellency of their rational nature, and to make reason and order the law of all their designs and actions. All Christians, as Christians, have one and the same calling, to live according to the Christian spirit, and to make the sublime precepts of the gospel, the rule and measure of all their tempers in common life. The one thing needful to one, is the one thing needful to all.

The merchant is no longer to hoard up treasures upon earth; the soldier is no longer to fight for glory; the scholar is no longer to pride himself in the depths of science; but they must all with one spirit "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." The fine lady must be clothed with humility. The polite gentleman must exchange gay thoughts for a contrite heart. The man of

quality must think himself miserable till he is born again. Servants must consider their service as done unto God. Masters must consider their servants as brethren in Christ, who are to be treated as fellow members of the mystical body of Christ. Young ladies must either devote themselves to piety, prayer, self-denial, and good works, in a virgin state; or else marry to be holy, sober, and prudent in the care of a family, bringing up their children in piety, humility and devotion, and abounding in all good works, to the utmost of their state and capacity. They may choose a married or a single life; but it is not left to their choice, whether they will make either state a state of holiness, humility, and devotion. It is no more left in their power, because they have fortunes, or are born of rich parents, to divide themselves between God and the world, or to take such pleasures as their fortunes would afford them, than it is allowable for them to be sometimes chaste and sometimes not.

They are not to consider how much religion may secure them a fair character, or how they may add devotion to a vain, and giddy life; but must look into the nature and end of Christianity, and then they will find, that whether married or unmarried, they have but one business upon their hands, viz. to be wise and pious, not in little modes and forms of worship; but in the whole turn of their minds, in the

whole form of all their behavior, and in the daily course of their common life.

Young gentlemen must consider what our blessed Savior said to the young gentleman in the gospel; he bid "him sell all that he had, and give it to the poor." Now though this text should not oblige all people to sell all, yet it certainly obliges all kinds of people to employ all their estates in such wise, and reasonable, and charitable ways, as may sufficiently show that all that they have is devoted to God, and that no part of it is kept from such uses to be spent in needless, vain, and foolish expenses.

If, therefore, young gentlemen propose to themselves a life of pleasure and indulgence, if they spend their estates in a high living, in luxury and intemperance, in state and equipage, in pleasures and diversions, in sports and gaming, and such gratifications of their foolish passions, they have as much reason to look upon themselves to be angels, as to be disciples of Christ.

The Son of God did not come to add an external form of worship to the several ways of life that are in the world; and leave people to live as they did before, in such tempers and enjoyments as the world approves. But as he came down from heaven, altogether divine and heavenly in his own nature, so it was to call mankind to a divine and heavenly life;—to the highest change of their whole nature and

temper; to be born again of the Holy Spirit; to walk in the wisdom and light and love of God; and be like him to the utmost of their power; to renounce all the most plausible ways of the world, whether of greatness, business, or pleasure; to mortify all their most agreeable passions; and to live in such wisdom, purity, and holiness, as might fit them to be glorious in the enjoyment of God to all eternity.

If you say, that a minister must be an eminent example of Christian holiness, because of his high and sacred calling, you say right. But if you say that it is more to his advantage to be exemplary, than it is yours, you greatly mistake. For there is nothing to make the highest degrees of holiness desirable to him, but what makes them equally desirable to every person of every family. For an exalted piety, high devotion, and the religious uses of every thing, is as much the glory and happiness of one state of life, as it is of another.

Do but fancy in your mind what a spirit of piety you would have in the best minister in the world, how you would have him love God, how you would have him imitate the life of our Savior and his apostles, how you would have him live above the world, shining in all the instances of a heavenly life, and then you have found out that spirit, which you ought to make the spirit of your own life.

I desire every reader to dwell awhile upon

this reflection, and perhaps he will find more conviction from it, than he imagines. For every thing that is great and glorious in religion, is as much the true glory of every man or woman, as it is the glory of any bishop. If high degrees of divine love, if fervent charity, if spotless purity, if heavenly affection, if constant mortification, if frequent devotion be the best and happiest way of life for any Christian: it is so for every Christian.

Consider again; if you were to see a minister in the whole course of his life, living below his character, conforming to all the foolish tempers of the world, and governed by the same cares and fears which govern vain and worldly men, what would you think of him? Would you think that he was only guilty of a small mistake? No: you would condemn him, as erring in that which is not only the most, but the only important matter that relates to him.

While you are thinking in this manner, turn your thoughts toward some of your acquaintance, your brother or sister, or any young person. Now if you see the common course of their lives to be not according to the doctrines of the gospel,—if you see that their way of life cannot be said to be a sincere endeavor to enter in at the strait gate, you see something that you are to condemn in the same degree, and for the same reasons. They do not commit a small mistake, but are wrong in that which is their all,

and mistake their true happiness, as much as that minister does, who neglects the high duties of his calling. Apply this reasoning to yourself. If you find yourself living an idle, indulgent, life, you have all that blindness and unreasonableness to charge upon yourself, that you can charge upon any irregular minister.

CHAP. XI.

GREAT DEVOTION FILLS OUR LIVES WITH THE GREATEST PEACE AND HAPPINESS THAT CAN BE ENJOYED IN THIS WORLD.

Some will object, that these rules of living to God in all that we do, are too great a restraint upon human life;—that it will be made too anxious a state, by introducing a regard to God in all our actions,—and that by depriving ourselves of so many seemingly innocent pleasures, we will render our lives dull, uneasy, and melancholy. To which it may be answered:

1. These rules are prescribed for, and will certainly procure a quite contrary end. Instead of making our lives dull and melancholy, they will render them full of content and strong satisfactions. By these rules we only change the childish satisfactions of our vain and sickly pas-

sions, for the solid enjoyments, and real happiness of a sound mind.

2. As there is no foundation for comfort in the enjoyments of this life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God governs the world, so the more we find out God in every thing, apply to him in every place, and look up to him in all our actions; the more we conform to his will, act according to his wisdom, and imitate his goodness; the more do we enjoy God, partake of the divine nature, and increase all that is happy and comfortable in human life.

3. He that is endeavoring to root out of his mind all pride, envy and ambition, is doing more to make himself happy, even in this life, than he that is contriving the means to indulge them. For these passions are the causes of all the disquiets and vexations of human life. They are the dropsies and fevers of our mind, vexing them with false appetites, and restless cravings after such things as we do not want, and spoiling our taste for those things which are our proper good.

Imagine that you somewhere saw a man who proposed reason as the rule of all his actions, that had no desires but after such things as nature wants, and religion approves, that was as pure from all the motions of pride, envy, and covetousness, as from thoughts of murder; that in this freedom from worldly passions, he had a soul full of divine love, wishing and praying

that all men may have what they want of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory in the life to come. Your own conscience will tell you, that he is the happiest man in the world, and that it is not in the power of the richest fancy to invent any higher happiness in the present state of life.

And on the other hand, suppose him to be in any degree less perfect. Suppose him but subject to one foolish fondness, or vain passion, your conscience will again tell you, that he so far lessens his own happiness, and robs himself of the true enjoyment of his other virtues. So true is it, that the more we live by the rules of religion, the more peaceful and happy do we render our lives.

If we look into the world, and view the disquiets and troubles of human life, we shall find that they are all owing to our violent passions. All trouble and uneasiness is founded in the want of something; would we therefore know the true cause of our disquiets, we must find out the cause of our wants. That which creates and increases our wants, does in the same degree create and increase our troubles and disquiets.

God has sent us into the world with very few wants; and the present world is well furnished to supply them. This is the state of man, born with few wants, and into a large world, very capable of supplying them. One would

reasonably suppose, that men should pass their lives in content and thankfulness, at least that they should be free from violent disquiets, as being placed in a world, that has more than enough to relieve all their wants.

If to all this we add, that this life, thus furnished with all that we want in it, is only a short passage to eternal glory, where we shall be clothed with the brightness of angels, and enter into the joys of God, we might still more reasonably expect, that human life should be a state of peace, and joy, and delight in God.

But alas! though God, and nature, and reason, make human life thus free from wants, and so full of happiness, yet our passions, in rebellion against God, nature and reason, create a new world of evils, and fill human life with imagin ary wants, and vain disquiets.

The man of pride has a thousand wants, which only his pride has created; and these render him as full of trouble, as if God had created him with a thousand appetites, without creating what was proper to satisfy them. Envy and ambition have also their endless wants, which disquiet the souls of men, and by their contradictory motions, render them as foolishly miserable, as those that want to fly and creep at the same time.

Let any complaining, disquieted man tell you the ground of his uneasiness, and you will plainly see, that he is the author of his own

torment. He is vexing himself at some imaginary evil, which will cease to torment him, as soon as he is content to be that which God, and nature, and reason require him to be.

If you should see a man passing his days in disquiet, because he could not walk upon the water, or catch birds as they fly by him, you would readily confess, that such an one might thank himself for such uneasiness. But if you look into the most tormenting disquiets of life, you will find them all thus absurd. What can you conceive more silly, than to suppose a man racking his brains, and studying how to fly? wandering from his own house and home, wearying himself with climbing upon every ascent, courting every body he meets, to lift him up from the ground, bruising himself with continual falls, and at last breaking his neck? And all this, from an imagination that it would be glorious to have the eyes of people gazing up at him, and mighty happy to eat, and drink, and sleep, at the top of the highest trees in the kingdom. Would you not readily own, that such an one was only disquieted by his own folly?

If you ask, what it signifies to suppose such silly creatures as these, who are nowhere to be found in human life. It may be answered, that wherever you see an ambitious man, there you see this vain and senseless flyer.

Again, if you should see a man that had a

large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, not suffering himself to drink half a draught, for fear of lessening his pond. If you should see him wasting his time and strength, in fetching more water to his pond, always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late to catch the drops of rain, gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud, in hopes of water, and always studying how to make every ditch empty itself into his pond. If you should see him grow gray in these anxious labors, and at last end a careful, thirsty life, by falling into his own pond, would you not say that such an one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned among madmen? But foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies, and absurd disquiets, of the covetous man.

I could easily proceed to show the same effects of all our other passions; and make it plainly appear, that all our miseries are entirely of our own making, and that in the same absurd manner, as in these instances.

Cælia is always telling you how provoked she is, what intolerably shocking things happen to her, what monstrous usage she suffers, and what vexations she meets with. She tells you that her patience is quite worn out, and there is no bearing the behavior of people. Every assembly that she is at, sends her home provoked; some-

thing or other has been said or done, that no reasonable, well-bred person ought to bear. Poor people that want her charity, are sent away with hasty answers, not because she has not a heart to part with money, but because she is too full of some trouble of her own, to attend to the complaints of others. Cælia has no business upon her hands, but to receive the income of a plentiful fortune; but yet by the doleful turn of her mind, you would think, that she had neither food nor lodging. If you see her look more pale than ordinary, if her lips tremble when she speaks to you, it is because she is just come from a visit, where Lupus took no notice of her, but talked all the time to Lucinda, who has not half her fortune. When cross accidents have so disordered her spirits, that she is forced to send for the doctor to make her able to eat, she tells him, that she never was well since she was born, and that she envies every beggar that she sees in health.

This is the disquiet life of Cælia, who has nothing to torment her but her own spirit.

If you would inspire her with christian humility, you need do no more to make her happy. This virtue would make her thankful to God for half so much health as she has had, and help her to enjoy more for the time to come. This virtue would keep off tremblings of the spirits, and loss of appetite, and her blood would need nothing else to sweeten it.

I have touched upon these absurd characters for no other end, but to convince you in the plainest manner, that the strictest rules of religion are so far from rendering life dull, anxious, and uncomfortable, that on the contrary, all the miseries, vexations, and complaints that are in the world, are owing to the want of religion; being directly caused by those absurd passions, which religion teaches us to deny.

So far, therefore, as you reduce your desires to such things as nature and reason require; and regulate all the motions of your heart by the strict rules of religion, so far you remove yourself from that infinity of wants and vexations, which torment every heart that is left to itself.

Most people confess, that religion preserves us from a great many evils, and helps us in many respects to a more happy enjoyment of ourselves; but then they imagine, that this is only true of such a moderate share of religion, as only gently restrains us from the excesses of our passions. They suppose that the strict rules and restraints of exalted piety, are such contradictions to our nature, as must make our lives dull and uncomfortable.

This objection supposes, that religion, moderately practised, adds much to the happiness of life; but that such height of piety as the perfection of religion requires, has a contrary effect. It supposes, therefore, that it is happy to be kept from the excesses of envy, but unhappy to

be kept from other degrees of envy; that it is happy to be delivered from a boundless ambition, but unhappy to be without a more moderate ambition. It supposes also, that the happiness of life consists in a mixture of ambition, and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetousness. All which is as absurd as to suppose that it is happy to be free from excessive pains, but unhappy to be without moderate pains; or that the happiness of health consisted in being partly sick, and partly well.

If humility be the peace and rest of the soul, then no one has so much happiness from humility, as he that is the most humble. If excessive envy is a torment of the soul, he most perfectly delivers himself from torment that most perfectly extinguishes envy. If there is any peace and joy in doing any action according to the will of God, he that brings the most of his actions to this rule, does most of all increase the peace and joy of his life.

And thus it is in every virtue; if you act up to every degree of it, the more happiness you have from it. And so of every vice; if you only abate its excesses, you do but little for yourself; but if you reject it in all degrees, then you feel the true ease and joy of a reformed mind. For example; if religion only restrains the excesses of revenge, but lets the spirit still live within you in lesser instances, your religion may have made your life a little more outwardly decent,

but not have made you at all happier or easier in yourself. But if you have once sacrificed all thoughts of revenge, in obedience to God, and are resolved to return good for evil at all times, that you may render yourself more like to God, and fitter for his mercy in the kingdom of love and glory; this is a height of virtue that will make you feel its happiness.

Piety requires us to renounce no ways of life, where we can act reasonably, and offer what we do to the glory of God. All ways of life, all satisfactions and enjoyments within these bounds, are allowed. Whatever you can do, or enjoy, as in the presence of God, as his rational creature; all that you can perform conformably to a rational nature, and the will of God, is allowed by the laws of piety. And will you think that your life will be uncomfortable, unless you may displease God, be a fool and mad, and act contrary to that reason and wisdom which he has implanted in you?

And as for those satisfactions, which are invented by the folly and corruption of the world, which inflame our passions, sink our souls into sensuality, and render us incapable of the divine favor either here or hereafter; surely it can be no uncomfortable state of life, to be rescued by religion from such self-murder, and to be rendered capable of eternal happiness.

Let us suppose a person destitute of that knowledge which we have from our senses,

placed somewhere by himself, in the midst of things which he did not know how to use; that he has by him bread, wine, water, golden dust, iron chains, gravel, garments, fire, &c. Let it be supposed, that he has no knowledge of the right use of these things, nor any direction from his senses how to quench his thirst, or satisfy his hunger, or make any use of the things about him. Let it be supposed, that in his thirst he puts gold dust into his eyes; when his eyes smart, he puts wine into his ears; that in his hunger, he puts gravel in his mouth; that in pain, he loads himself with the iron chains; that feeling cold, he puts his feet in the water; that being frighted at the fire, he runs away from it; that being weary, he makes a seat of his bread. Through his ignorance of the right use of the things that are about him, he will plainly torment himself while he lives; and would at last die, blinded with dust, choked with gravel, and loaded with irons. Let it be supposed that some good being came to him, and showed him the nature and use of all the things that were about him, and gave him such rules of using them, as would certainly, if observed, make him the happier for all that he had, and deliver him from the pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold. Now could you with any reason affirm, that those rules of using the things that were about him, has rendered that poor man's life dull and uncomfortable?

This is in some measure a representation of

the rules of religion. They only relieve our ignorance, save us from tormenting ourselves, and teach us to use every thing to our proper advantage.

Man is placed in a world full of variety; his ignorance makes him use many things as absurdly, as the man that put dust in his eyes to relieve his thirst, or put on chains to remove pain. Religion therefore here comes to his relief, and gives him strict rules of using every thing so that he may have always the pleasure of receiving a right benefit from them. It shows him what is strictly right in meat, drink and clothes; and that he has nothing to expect from this world, but to satisfy his own wants; and then to extend his assistance to all his brethren, as far as he is able. It tells him, that this world is incapable of giving him any other happiness; and that all endeavors to be happy in heaps of money, or acres of land, in fine clothes, rich beds, stately equipage, or show and splendor, are only vain endeavors, ignorant attempts after impossibilities; these things being no more able to give the least degree of happiness, than dust in the eyes can cure thirst, or gravel in the mouth satisfy hunger; but, like dust and gravel misapplied, will only serve to render him more unhappy by such an ignorant misuse of them. It tells him, that there is a much greater good prepared for man, than eating, drinking, and dressing; reserved for him to enter upon, as

soon as this short life is over; where he shall dwell in the light and glory of God to all eternity. It tells him that this glory will be given to all those who make a right use of the things of this present world; who do not blind themselves with gold dust, or eat gravel, or groan under loads of iron of their own putting on; but use bread, water, wine, and garments, for such ends as are according to nature and reason; and who with faith and thankfulness worship the kind Giver of all that they enjoy here, and hope for hereafter.

Now can any one say, that the strictest rules of such a religion as this, debar us any of the comforts of life? Who could complain of the severe strictness of a law, that without any exception forbade the putting of dust into our eyes? Who could think it too rigid, that there were no abatements? Now this is the strictness of religion; it requires nothing of us strictly, or without abatements, but where every degree of the thing is wrong, where every indulgence does us some hurt.

If religion forbids all revenge without exception, it is because all revenge is of the nature of poison. If religion commands universal charity, without any reserve; it is because all degrees of love are degrees of happiness. If religion has laws against laying up for ourselves treasures upon earth, and commands us to be content with food and raiment; it is because every other use

of the world is abusing it to our own vexation, and turning all its conveniences into snares and traps to destroy us. It is because this plainness and simplicity of life, secures us from the cares and pains of restless pride and envy, and makes it easier to keep that strait road that will carry us to eternal life. It is so far therefore from being a hard law of religion, to make this use of our riches, that a reasonable man would rejoice in that religion which teaches him to be happier in that which he gives away, than in that which he keeps for himself; which teaches him to make his spare food and raiment greater blessings, than that which feeds and clothes his own body. If religion requires us sometimes to deny our natural appetites, it is to lessen that struggle that is in our nature; to render our bodies fitter instruments of purity, and more obedient to the motions of divine grace; to dry up the springs of our passions that war against the soul, to cool the flame of our blood, and render the mind more capable of divine meditations. So that though these abstinences give some pain to the body, yet they so lessen the power of bodily appetites and passions, and so increase our taste of spiritual joys, that when practised with discretion, they add much to the comfortable enjoyment of our lives.

If religion calls us to a life of watching and prayer, it is because we live among a crowd of enemies, and are always in need of the assist-

ance of God. If we are to confess and bewail our sins, it is because such confessions relieve the mind, and restore it to ease; as burdens and weights taken off the shoulders, relieve the body. If we are to be frequent and fervent in holy petitions, it is to keep us steady in the sight of our true good, and that we may never want the happiness of a lively faith, a joyful hope, and well-grounded trust in God. If we are to pray often, it is that we may be often happy in such secret joys as only prayer can give; in such communications of the divine presence, as will fill our minds with all the happiness that beings not in heaven are capable of.

Was there any thing in the world more worthy our care; was there any exercise of the mind, or any conversation with men, that turned more to our advantage than this intercouse with God, we should not be called to such a continuance in prayer. If we consider, that all that is in the world, is only for the body, and bodily enjoyments, we will have reason to rejoice at those hours of prayer, which carry us to higher consolations, which raise us above these poor concerns, which open to the mind a scene of greater things, and accustom the soul to the hope and expectation of them. Religion commands us to live wholly to God, and to do all to his glory, because every other way is living wholly against ourselves, and will end in our own shame and confusion of face.

As creatures, whether men or angels, make not themselves, so they enjoy nothing from themselves. If they are great, it must be only as great receivers of the gifts of God. Their power can only be so much of the divine power acting in them. Their wisdom can be only so much of the divine wisdom shining within them; and their light and glory, only so much of the light and glory of God shining upon them. As they are not men or angels, because they had a mind to be so, but because the will of God formed them what they are; so they cannot enjoy the happiness of men or angels, because they have a mind to it, but because it is the will of God, that such things be the happiness of men, and such things the happiness of angels. But now if God be thus all in all; if his will is thus the measure of all things, and all natures; if nothing can be done, but by his power; if nothing can be seen, but by a light from him; if we have nothing to fear, but from his justice; if we have nothing to hope for, but from his goodness; if this is the nature of man, thus helpless in himself; if this is the state of all creatures, as well those in heaven, as those on earth; if they are nothing, can do nothing, can suffer no pain, nor feel any happiness, but so far, and in such degrees, as the power of God does all this: if this be the state of things, then how can we have the least glimpse of joy and comfort, how can we have any peaceful enjoyment of ourselves, but by

living wholly unto that God, using and doing every thing conformably to his will? A life thus devoted unto God, looking wholly unto him in all our actions, and doing all things suitably to his glory, is so far from being dull, and uncomfortable, that it creates new comforts in every thing that we do.

On the contrary, would you see how happy they are who live according to their own wills, who cannot submit to the dull and melancholy business of a life devoted unto God? look at the man in the parable, to whom his lord had given one talent. He could not bear the thoughts of using his talent according to the will of him from whom he had it, and therefore he chose to make himself happier in a way of his own. "Lord," says he, "I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo there thou hast that is thine." Matt. xxv. 24. His lord having convicted him out of his own mouth, despatches him with this sentence: "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxv. 30.

Here you see how unhappy this man made himself by not acting according to the Lord's will. It was, according to his own account, a happiness of murmuring and discontent; "I knew thee," sayshe, "that thou wast a hard man:" it

was a happiness of fears and apprehensions; "I was afraid," says he; it was a happiness of vain labors and fruitless travails: "I went," says he, "and hid thy talent;" and after having been a while the sport of foolish passions, tormenting fears, and fruitless labors, he is rewarded at last with darkness, eternal weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Now this is the happiness of all those, who look upon a strict and exalted piety, that is, a right use of their talent, to be a dull and melancholy state of life. They may live awhile free from the restraints and directions of religion, but instead of these, they must be under the absurd government of their passions: they must, like the man in the parable, live in murmurings and discontents, in fears and apprehensions. They may avoid the labor of doing good, of spending their time devoutly, of laying up treasures in heaven, of clothing the naked, of visiting the sick; but then they must, like this man, have labors and pains in vain, that tend to no use or advantage, that do no good either to themselves, or others; they must travail, and labor, and work, and dig to hide their talent in the earth. They must like him, at the Lord's coming, be convicted out of their own mouths, be accused by their own hearts, and have every thing that they have said and thought of religion, be made to show the justice of their condemnation to eternal darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Life rightly employed. The divine approbation.

On the other hand, would you see a short description of the happiness of a life rightly employed, wholly devoted to God, you must look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given five talents. "Lord," says he, "thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here you see that a life that is wholly intent upon the improvement of the talents that is wholly devoted unto God, is a state of happiness, prosperous labors, and glorious success. Here are not, as in the former case, any uneasy passions, murmurings, vain fears, and fruitless labors. The man is not toiling, and digging in the earth for no end or advantage; but his pious labors prosper in his hands, his happiness increases upon him, the blessing of five becomes the blessing of ten talents; and he is received with a "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now as the case of these men in the parable left nothing else to their choice, but either to be happy in using their gifts to the glory of the Lord, or miserable by using them according to their own humors and fancies; so the state of Christianity leaves us no other choice.

All that we have, all that we are, all that we

enjoy, are only so many talents from God: if we use them to the ends of a pious and holy life, our five talents will become ten, and our labors will carry us into the joy of our Lord; but if we abuse them to the gratification of our own passions, sacrificing the gifts of God to our own pride and vanity, we shall live here in vain labors and foolish anxieties, shunning religion as a melancholy thing, accusing our Lord as a hard master, and then fall into everlasting misery.

How ignorant therefore are they of the nature of religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God, who think a life of strict piety to be a dull state; when it is so plain and certain, that there is neither comfort or joy to be found in any thing else?

CHAP. XII.

THE HAPPINESS OF A LIFE WHOLLY DEVOTED TO GOD, FARTHER PROVED, FROM THE VAIN, SENSUAL, AND RIDICULOUS ENJOYMENTS, WHICH THEY ARE FORCED TO TAKE UP WITH, WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN HUMORS.

We may still see more of the happiness of a life devoted unto God, by considering the poor contrivances for happiness, and the contemptible ways of life, which they adopt, who are not under the directions of strict piety.

Look at their lives, who live by no rule but their own humors and fancies. See what it is, which they call joy, and greatness, and happiness. See how they rejoice and repent, change and fly from one delusion to another; and we shall find great reason to rejoice, that God hath appointed a strait and narrow way that leadeth unto life, and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forced to take up with such shadows of joy and happiness.

These things which make up the joy and happiness of this world, are mere inventions, which have no foundation in nature and reason, are not the proper good or happiness of man, and noway improve either his body, or his mind, or carry him to his true end. For instance, when a man proposes to be happy in ways of ambition, by raising himself to some imaginary heights above other people; this is truly an invention of happiness which has no foundation in nature, but is as mere a cheat of our own making, as if a man should intend to make himself happy by climbing up a ladder. If a woman seeks for happiness from fine colors or spots upon her face, from jewels and rich clothes, this is as merely an invention of happiness, as contrary to nature and reason, as if she should propose to make herself happy, by painting a post, and putting the same finery upon it. It is in this respect that I call these joys and happiness of the world, mere inventions of happiness,

because neither God, nor nature, nor reason has appointed them as such; but whatever appears joyful, or great, or happy in them, is entirely created or invented by the blindness and vanity of our own minds.

On these inventions of happiness, I desire you to cast your eye, that you may thence learn, how great a good religion is, which delivers from such a multitude of follies and vain pursuits, as are the torment and vexation of minds that wander from their true happiness in God.

Flatus is rich and in health, yet always uneasy, and always searching after happiness. Every time you visit him, you find some new project in his head; he is eager upon it, as something that is more worth his while, and will do more for him, than any thing previously attempted. Every new thing so seizes him, that if you was to take him from it, he would think himself quite undone. His sanguine temper, and strong passions, promise him so much happiness in every thing, that he is always cheated, and is satisfied with nothing.

At his first setting out in life, fine clothes were his delight. His inquiry was only after the best tailors, and he had no thoughts of excelling in any thing but dress. He spared no expense, but carried every nicety to its greatest height. But this happiness not answering his expectations, he left off his nicety, railed at fops and beaux, and gave himself up to gaming.

This new pleasure satisfied him for some time, he envied no other way of life. But being by the fate of play drawn into a duel, where he narrowly escaped his death, he left off dice, and no longer sought happiness among gamesters.

The next thing that seized his imagination, was the diversions of the town: and for more than a twelvemonth, you heard him talk of nothing but ladies, drawing-rooms, birth-nights, plays, balls, and assemblies. Growing sick of these, he had recourse to hard drinking. Here he had many a merry night, and met with stronger joys than any he had felt before. Here he had thoughts of setting up his staff, and looking out no farther; but falling into a fever, he grew angry at strong liquors, and took his leave of inebriation.

The next attempt after happiness, carried him into the field; for two or three years nothing was so happy as hunting; he entered upon it with all his soul, and leaped more hedges and ditches than had ever been known in so short a time. You never saw him but in a green coat; he was the envy of all who blew the horn, and always spoke to his dogs in great propriety of language. If you met him at home in a bad day, you would hear him blow his horn, and be entertained with the surprising accidents of the last noble chase. No sooner had Flatus outdone all the world in the breed and education of his dogs, built new kennels, new stables, and bought

Pleasures of building. Pleasures of riding.

a new hunting-seat, but he immediately got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away his dogs, and was for some time after deep in the pleasures of building.

Now he invents new kinds of dove-cotes, and has such contrivances in his barns and stables, as were never seen before. He wonders at the dulness of the old builders, is wholly bent upon the improvement of architecture, and will hardly hang a door in the ordinary way. He tells his friends, that he never was so delighted in any thing in his life; that he has more happiness among his brick and mortar, than ever he had at court; and that he is contriving how to have some little matter to do that way as long as he lives.

The next year he leaves his house unfinished, complains to every body of masons and carpenters, and devotes himself wholly to the happiness of riding about. After this, you can never see him but on horseback, and so highly delighted with this new way of life, that he would tell you, give him but his horse and a clean country to ride in, and you might take all the rest to yourself. A variety of new saddles and bridles, and a great change of horses, added much to the pleasure of this new way of life. But however, having after some time tired both himself and his horses, the happiest thing he could think of next, was to go abroad and visit foreign coun-

tries; and there indeed happiness exceeded his imagination, and he was only uneasy that he had begun so fine a life no sooner. The next month he returned home, unable to bear any longer the impertinence of foreigners.

Flatus is very ill-natured, or otherwise, just as his affairs happen to be when you visit him. If you find him when some project is almost worn out, you will find a peevish ill-bred man; but if you had seen him just as he entered upon his riding regimen, or begun to excel in sounding of the horn, you had been saluted with the greatest civility.

Flatus is at last at a full stand, and doing what he never did in his life before, he is reasoning and reflecting with himself, which of his cast-off ways of life he shall try again. But here a new project comes in to his relief. He is now living upon herbs, and running about the country, to get himself into as good health as any running footman.

I have been thus circumstantial in so many foolish particulars of this kind, because I hope, that every particular folly that you see here, will naturally turn itself into an argument for the wisdom and happiness of a religious life.

If you had but just cast your eye upon a madman, or a fool, it perhaps signifies little or nothing to you; but if you was to attend them for some days, and observe the lamentable madness and stupidity of all their actions, this would

be an affecting sight, and would make you often bless yourself for the enjoyment of your reason and sense. Just so, if you are only told in the gross, of the folly and madness of a life devoted to the world, it makes little or no impression; but if you are shown how such people live every day—if you see the continual folly and madness of all their particular actions and designs, this would be an affecting sight, and make you bless God, for having given you to aspire after a greater happiness.

I shall therefore continue this method a little farther, and endeavor to recommend the happiness of piety to you, by showing you in some other instances, how miserably and poorly they live, who live without it.

You will perhaps say, that the ridiculous, restless life of Flatus, is not the common state of those who resign themselves up to live by their own humors; and that therefore it is not so great an argument for the happiness of a religious life, as I would make it. I answer, that I am afraid it is one of the most general characters in life; and that few people can read it, without seeing something in it that belongs to themselves. For where shall we find that wise and happy man, who has not been eagerly pursuing different appearances of happiness, sometimes thinking it was here, and sometimes there?

If people were to divide their lives into particular stages, and ask themselves what they

were pursuing, or what it was which they had chiefly in view, when they were twenty years old, what at twenty-five, what at thirty, what at forty, what at fifty, and so on, till they were brought to their last bed, many would find, that they had liked, and disliked, and pursued, as many different appearances of happiness, as are to be seen in the life of Flatus.

But let it be granted, that people are seldom of such restless tempers as Flatus; the difference then is only this, Flatus is continually trying something new, but others are content with some one state. They have so much steadiness of temper, that some of them seek after no other happiness, but that of heaping up riches; others grow old in the sports of the field; others are content to drink themselves to death. Is there any thing more happy or reasonable, in such a life, than in that of Flatus? Is it not as great and desirable, as wise and happy, to be constantly changing from one thing to another, as to be nothing else but a gatherer of money, a hunter, a gamester, or a drunkard, all your life?

Shall religion be looked upon as dull and melancholy, for calling men from such happiness as this, to live according to the laws of God, to labor after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory?

Turn your eyes now another way, and let the

trifling joys of *Feliciana*, teach you how wise they are, what delusion they escape, whose hearts and hopes are fixed upon a happiness in God.

If you were to live with Feliciana but one half year, you would see all the happiness that she is to have as long as she lives. She has no more to come, but the poor repetition of that which could never have pleased once, but through a littleness of mind, and want of thought.

She is again to be dressed fine, and keep her visiting day. She is again to change the color of her clothes, again to have a new head-dress, and again to put patches on her face. She is again to see who acts best at the play, and who sings finest at the opera. She is again to make ten visits in a day, and be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, easily and politely about nothing. She is to be again delighted with some new fashion; and again angry at the change of some old one. She is to be again at cards, at midnight, and in bed at noon. She is to be again pleased with hypocritical compliments, and again disturbed with imaginary affronts. She is to be again pleased with her good luck at play, and again tormented with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare herself for a birth-night, and again see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town, again to have

Feliciana's pleasures poor. Most women's more so.

secret intelligence of private amours, and early notice of marriages, quarrels, and partings.

These are the substantial and regular parts of Feliciana's happiness; and she never knew a pleasant day in her life, but it was owing to some one, or more of these things. It is for this happiness, that she has always been deaf to the reasonings of religion, that her heart has been too gay and cheerful to consider what is right or wrong in regard to eternity; or to listen to the sound of such dull words, as wisdom, piety and devotion. It is for fear of losing some of this happiness, that she refuses to meditate on the immortality of her soul, her relation to God, or those joys, which makes saints and angels infinitely happy in the presence and glory of God.

Now let it here be observed, that poor as this round of happiness appears, most women that avoid the restraints of religion for a gay life, must be content with very small parts of it. As they have not Feliciana's fortune and figure in the world, so they must give away the comforts of a pious life, for a very small part of her happiness.

And if you look into the world, and observe the lives of those women, whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly unto God, in a wise and pious employment of themselves, you will find most of them to be such, as lose all the comforts of religion, without gaining the tenth

part of Feliciana's happiness. They are such as spend their time and fortunes only in mimicking the pleasures of richer people; and rather look and long after, than enjoy those delusions, which are only to be purchased by considerable fortunes.

But take another example in the poor condition of Succus, whose greatest happiness, is a good night's rest, and a good meal. When he talks of happiness, it is always in such expressions, as shows you, that he has only his bed and his dinner in his thoughts.

This regard to his meals and repose, makes Succus order all the rest of his time with relation to them. He will undertake no business that may hurry his spirits, or break in upon his hours of eating and rest. If he reads, it shall only be for half an hour, because that is sufficient to amuse the spirits; and he will read something that may make him laugh, as rendering the body fitter for its food and rest. Or if he has at any time a mind to indulge a grave thought, he always has recourse to a useful treatise upon ancient cookery.

He talks coolly and moderately upon all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as of catching cold; being very positive, that they are both equally injurious to the stomach. If you ever see him more hot than ordinary, it is upon some provoking occasion, when the dispute about cookery runs very high, or in the defence

of some beloved dish, which has often made him happy. But he has been so long upon these subjects, is so well acquainted with all that can be said on both sides, and has so often answered all objections, that he generally decides the matter with great gravity.

All the hours that are not devoted to repose, or nourishment, are looked upon as spare time. For this reason he lodges near a coffee-house and a tavern, that when he rises in the morning, he may hear the news, and when he parts at night, he may not have far to bed. In the morning you always see him in the same place in the coffee-room, and if he seems more attentively engaged than ordinary, it is because some criminal is broke out of Newgate, or some lady was robbed last night, but they cannot tell where. When he has learned all that he can, he goes home to settle the matter with the barber's boy, that comes to shave him.

The next waste time that lies upon his hands, is from dinner to supper. And if melancholy thoughts ever come into his head, it is at this time, when he is often left to himself for an hour or more, and that after the greatest pleasure he knows, is just over He is afraid to sleep, because he has heard it is not healthful at that time, so that he is forced to refuse so welcome a guest. But here he is generally relieved by playing at cards, till it is time to think of some little nice matter for supper. After this, Succus

takes his glass, talks of the excellency of the English constitution, and praises that minister the most, who keeps the best table.

On a Sunday night you may sometimes hear him condemning the iniquity of the town rakes; and the bitterest thing that he says against them, is this, that he verily believes some of them are so abandoned, as not to have a regular meal, or a sound night's sleep in a week.

At eleven, Succus bids all good night, and parts in great friendship. He is presently in bed, and sleeps till it is time to go to the coffee-house next morning. If you was to live with Succus for a twelvemonth, this is all that you would see in his life, except a few curses and oaths that he uses as occasion offers.

Who can help blessing God for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, when he sees what variety of folly they sink into, who live without it? Who would not heartily engage in all the labors and exercises of a pious life, be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, when he sees what dull sensuality, what poor views, what gross enjoyments they are left to who seek for happiness in other ways. So that whether we consider the greatness of religion, or the littleness of all other things, and the meanness of all other enjoyments, there is nothing to be found in nature for a thoughtful mind to rest upon, but a happiness in the hopes of religion.

Consider how unreasonably it is pretended, that a life of strict piety must be dull and anxious. Can it be said, that the duties and restraints of religion must render our lives melancholy, when they only deprive us of such gratifications, as has been here laid before you?

Must it be tiresome to act wisely and virtuously, to do good, to imitate the divine perfections, and prepare yourself for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome, to be delivered from blindness and vanity, from false hopes and vain fears, to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your friend, that all must work for your good, that neither life nor death, neither men nor devils can do you any harm; but that all your sufferings and doings, watchings and prayers, labors of love and improvements, are in a short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory in the presence of God. Must such a state as this be dull and tiresome for want of such happiness as Flatus or Feliciana enjoys?

If this cannot be said, then there is no happiness or pleasure lost, by being strictly pious; nor has the devout man any thing to envy in any other state of life. For all the art and contrivance in the world, without religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its happiness to any greater height, than Flatus or Feliciana have done. The finest wit, the greatest genius upon earth, if not governed by religion must be

as foolish, and low, and vain, in his methods of happiness, as the poor Succus.

If you saw a man endeavoring all his life to satisfy his thirst, by holding up the same empty cup to his mouth, you would certainly despise his ignorance. But if you should see others of brighter parts, and finer understandings, ridiculing the dull satisfaction of one cup, and thinking to satisfy their thirst by a variety of golden but empty cups; would you think that these were ever the wiser, or happier, or better employed?

Now this is all the difference that you can see in mere worldlings. The dull and heavy soul may be content with one appearance of happiness, and be continually trying to hold the same empty cup to his mouth. But then, let the wit, the great scholar, the fine genius, the great statesman, the polite gentleman, lay all their heads together, and they can only show you more and various appearances of happiness; give them all the world into their hands, they can only make a great variety of empty cups.

If you would but use yourself to such meditations as these, to reflect upon the vanity of all orders of life without piety, to consider how all the ways of the world, are so many different ways of error, blindness, and mistake, you would soon find your heart made wiser and better by it. These meditations would awaken your soul to a zealous desire of that solid happiness, which is only to be found in recourse to God.

CHAP. XIII

THE MOST REGULAR KIND OF LIFE, THAT IS NOT GOVERNED BY GREAT DEVOTION, SUFFICIENTLY SHOWS MISERY, WANT, AND EMPTINESS.

THE one thing needful, or the great end of life, is not left to be discovered by fine reasoning, and deep reflections; but is pressed upon us in the plainest manner, by the experience of all our senses, by every thing that we meet with in life.

Let us but intend to see and hear, and the whole world becomes a book of wisdom and instruction to us. All that is regular in the order of nature, all that is accidental in the course of things, all the mistakes and disappointments that happen to ourselves, all the miseries and errors that we see in other people, become so many plain lessons of advice to us; teaching us with as much assurance as an angel from heaven, that we can noways raise ourselves to any true happiness, but by turning all our thoughts, our wishes, and endeavors, after the happiness of another life.

It is to this right use of the world that I would lead you, by directing you to turn your eyes upon every shape of human folly, that you may thence draw fresh arguments and motives of living to the best and greatest purpose of your creation. And if you would but carry this intention about you, of profiting by the follies of the

world, and of learning the greatness of religion, from the littleness and vanity of every other way of life; you would find every day, every place, and every person, a fresh proof of their wisdom, who choose to live wholly unto God. You would then return home, the wiser, the better, and the more strengthened in religion, by every thing that has fallen in your way.

Octavius is a learned, ingenious man, well versed in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in Europe. The other day, being just recovered from a lingering fever, he took upon him to talk thus to his friends. My glass, says he, is almost run out; and your eyes see how many marks of age and death I bear about me. I plainly feel myself sinking. I fully believe, that one year more will conclude my reckoning.

The attention of his friends was much raised by such a declaration, expecting to hear something truly excellent from so learned a man, who had but a year longer to live. When Octavius proceeded in this manner: for these reasons, my friends, says he, I have left off all taverns, the wine of those places is not good enough for me in this decay of nature. I must now be nice in what I drink; I can't pretend to do as I have done; and therefore I am resolved to furnish my own cellar with a little of the very best, though it cost me ever so much.

I must also tell you, my friends, that age

forces a man to be wise in many other respects, and makes us change many of our opinions and practices. You know how much I have liked a large acquaintance. I now condemn it as an error. Three or four cheerful, diverting companions, is all I now desire; because I find that in my present infirmities, if I am left alone, or to grave company, I am not easy.

A few days after Octavius had made this declaration to his friends, he relapsed into his former illness, was committed to a nurse, who closed his eyes before his fresh parcel of wine came in.

Young Eugenius, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man, with full resolutions of devoting himself wholly unto God.

I never, said he, was so deeply affected with the wisdom and importance of religion, as when I saw how poorly and meanly the learned Octavius was to leave the world through the want of it.

How often had I envied his great learning, his skill in language, his knowledge of antiquity, his address and fine manner of expressing himself upon all subjects! But when I saw how poorly it all ended, what was to be the last year of such a life, and how foolishly the master of all these accomplishments was then forced to talk, for want of being acquainted with the joys and expectations of piety; I was thoroughly convinced, that there was nothing to be envied or

desired, but a life of true piety: nor any thing so poor and comfortless, as a death without it.

Now as the young Eugenius was thus edified and instructed in the present case; so, if you have any thing of his thoughtful temper, you will find that arguments for the wisdom and happiness of a strict piety, offer themselves in all places, and appeal to all your senses in the plainest manner.

But, if to these admonitions we add the lights of religion, those great truths which the Son of God has taught us; it will then be as much past all doubt, that there is but one happiness for man, as that there is but one God.

Was all to die with our bodies, there might be some pretence for those different sorts of happiness, that are so much talked of: but since our all begins at the death of our bodies; since all men are to be immortal either in misery or happiness, in a world entirely different from this; since they are all hastening hence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in sickness, some in health, some sleeping, some waking, some at midnight, others at cock-crowing, and all at hours that they know not of; is it not certain that no man can exceed another in joy and happiness, but so far as he exceeds him in those virtues which fit him for a happier death?

Cognatus is a sober, regular clergyman, of good repute in the world, very orthodox, and

well esteemed in his parish. All his parishioners say he is an honest man, and very notable at making a bargain. The farmers listen to him with great attention, when he talks of the most proper time of selling corn.

He has been for twenty years a diligent observer of markets, and has raised a considerable fortune by good management.

Cognatus has been very prosperous all his time; but still he has had the uneasiness and vexations that they have, who are deep in worldly business. Taxes, losses, crosses, bad mortgages, bad tenants, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conversation; and a good or bad season has a great effect upon his spirits.

Cognatus has no other end in growing rich, but that he may leave a considerable fortune to a niece, whom he has politely educated.

But now if Cognatus when he first entered into holy orders, had perceived how absurd a thing it is to grow rich by the Gospel: if he had proposed to himself the example of some primitive father; if he had had the piety of the great St. Austin in his eye, who durst not enrich any of his relations out of the revenue of the church: if, instead of twenty years care to lay up treasures upon earth, he had distributed the income of every year in the most Christian acts of charity and compassion. If, instead of tempting his niece to be proud, and providing her with such

ornaments, as the apostle forbids, he had clothed, comforted, and assisted numbers of widows, orphans, and distressed, who were all to appear for him at the last day. If, instead of the cares and anxieties of bad bonds, troublesome mortgages and ill bargains, he had had the constant comfort of knowing that his treasure was securely laid up, where neither moth corrupteth nor thieves break through and steal; could it with any reason be said, that he had mistaken the spirit and dignity of his order, or lessened any of that happiness which is to be found in his sacred employments?

If he had thought it better to recommend some honest labor to his niece, than to support her in idleness could it be said, that this strictness of piety, had robbed Cognatus of any real happiness? Could it be said, that a life thus governed by the spirit of the gospel, must be dull and melancholy, if compared to that of raising a fortune for a niece?

Now as this cannot be said in the present case, so in every other kind of life, if you enter into the particulars of it, you will find, that however easy and prosperous it may seem, yet you cannot add piety to any part of it, without adding so much of a better joy and happiness.

Look now at that condition of life which draws the envy of all eyes.

Negotius is a temperate, honest man. He served his time under a master of great trade,

but has by his own management made it a more considerable business than ever it was before. For thirty years last past, he has wrote fifty or sixty letters in a week, and is busy in corresponding with all parts of Europe. The general good of trade seems to Negotius to be the general good of life; whomsoever he admires, whatever he commends or condemns, either in church or state, is admired, commended, or condemned, with some regard to trade.

As money is continually pouring in upon him, so he often lets it go in various kinds of expense and generosity, and sometimes in ways of charity.

Negotius is always ready to join in any public contribution. If a purse is making at any place where he happens to be, whether it be to buy a plate for a horse-race, or to redeem a prisoner out of jail, you are always sure of having something from him.

If you ask what it is that has secured him from scandalous vices, it is the same thing that has kept him from all strictness of devotion, viz. his great business. He has always had too many important things in his head, his thoughts have been too much employed, to suffer him to fall either into any course of rakery, or to feel the necessity of an inward, solid piety.

For this reason he hears of the pleasures of debauchery, and the pleasures of piety, with the same indifference; and has no more desire of

living in the one than in the other, because neither of them consist with his turn of mind.

If Negotius was asked, what it is that he drives at in life, he would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he was asked, what any other person is thinking of. For though he always seems to himself to know what he is doing, and has many things in his head, which are the motives of his actions; yet he cannot tell you of any general end of life, that he has chosen with deliberation, as being truly worthy of all his pains.

He has several confused notions in his head, which have been a long time there; such as these, viz. That it is something great to have more business than other people, to have more dealings upon his hands than an hundred of the same profession; to grow continually richer and richer, and to raise an immense fortune before he dies.

The generality of people, when they think of happiness, think upon Negotius, in whose life every instance of happiness is supposed to meet; sober, prudent, rich, prosperous, generous, and charitable. Let us now therefore look at this condition in another but truer light.

Let it be supposed, that this same Negotius grew old in this course of trading; and that the result of all this labor, and care, and application to business, was only this, that he should die possessed of more than a hundred

thousand pairs of boots and spurs, and as many great coats.

I believe it would be readily granted, that a life of such business was as poor and ridiculous as any that can be invented. It would puzzle any one to show, that a man who has spent all his time and thoughts in business, that he might die worth a hundred thousand pounds, is any whit wiser than he, who has taken the same pains to have as many pairs of boots and spurs when he leaves the world.

If the temper and state of our souls be our whole state; if the only end of life be to die as free from sin, and as exalted in virtue as we can; if as we came naked, so we are to return, and to stand a trial before Christ, and his holy angels, for everlasting happiness or misery; what can it possibly signify what a man had, or had not, in this world? What can it signify what you call those things which a man has left behind him; whether you call them his, or any one's else; whether you call them trees or fields, or birds and feathers; whether you call them an hundred thousand pounds, or a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs. I say, call them; for the things signify no more to him than the names.

If when he has got all, his soul is to go among separate spirits, and his body be laid by in a coffin, till the last trumpet calls him to judgment; where the inquiry will be, how humbly, devout-

ly, charitably, and heavenly we have spoken, thought and acted, whilst we were in the body; how can we say, that he who has wore out his life in raising a hundred thousand pounds, has acted wiser for himself, than he who has taken the same care to procure a hundred thousand of any thing else?

But farther: Let it now be supposed, that Negotius, when he first entered into business, found that he had a much greater business upon his hands, than that to which he had served an apprenticeship: that there were things which belong to man, of much greater importance than all that our eyes can see; so glorious as to deserve all our thoughts; so dangerous, as to need all our care; and so certain, as never to deceive the faithful laborer. Let it be supposed, that he discovered that his soul was more to him than his body; that it was better to grow in the virtues than to have a full purse; that it was better to be fit for heaven, than to have a variety of fine houses upon the earth; that it was better to secure an everlasting happiness, than to have plenty of things which he cannot keep; better to live in habits of humility, piety, devotion, charity, and self-denial, than to die unprepared for judgment; better to be most like our Savior, or some eminent saint, than to excel all the tradesmen in the world in business and bulk of fortune. Let it be supposed, that Negotius believing these things to be true, had entirely devoted

himself to God at his first setting out in the world, resolving to pursue his business no farther than was consistent with great devotion, humility, and self-denial; and for no other ends, but to provide himself with a sober subsistence, and to do all the good that he could.

Let it therefore be supposed, that instead of the continual hurry of business, he was frequent in his retirements, and a strict observer of all the hours of prayer; that instead of restless desires, his soul had been full of the love of God, constantly watching against worldly tempers, and aspiring after divine grace; that instead of worldly cares and contrivances, he was busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that instead of costly show and expensive generosity of a splendid life, he loved and exercised all instances of humility and lowliness; that instead of great treats and full tables, his house only furnished a sober refreshment to those that wanted it.

Had this been the christian spirit of Negotius, can any one say, that he had lost the true joy and happiness of life?

Can it be said, that a life made exemplary by such virtues as keep heaven always in our sight, delight and exalt the soul here, and prepare it for the presence of God hereafter, must be poor and dull, if compared to that of heaping up riches, which can neither stay with us, nor we with them?

What would be prudent in a consumptive man.

Imagine to yourself some person in a consumption, or any other incurable distemper, wholly intent upon doing every thing in the spirit of religion, making the wisest use of all his time, fortune and abilities. If he was for carrying every duty of piety to its greatest height, and striving to have all the advantage that could be had from the remainder of his life; if he avoided all business, but such as was necessary; if he was averse to all the follies and vanities of the world, had no taste for finery and show, but sought all his comfort in the hopes and expectations of religion; you would certainly commend his prudence, you would say, that he had taken the right method to make himself as joyful and happy as any one can be in a state of such infirmity.

On the other hand, if you should see the same person, with trembling hands, short breath, thin jaws, and hollow eyes, wholly intent upon business and bargains, as long as he could speak; if you should see him pleased with fine clothes, when he could scarce stand to be dressed, and laying out his money in horses and dogs, you would certainly condemn him.

Now as it is easy to see the reasonableness of a religious spirit in a consumptive man; so we may easily perceive the wisdom of a pious temper in every other state of life.

How soon will every man that is in health, be in the state of him that is in a consumption!

No man can calculate on long life.

How soon will he want all the same comforts and satisfactions of religion, which every dying man wants! If it be wise and happy to live piously, because we have not above a year to live, is it not being more wise, and making ourselves more happy, because we may have more years? If one year of piety before we die, is so desirable, are not more years of piety much more desirable?

If a man had five fixed years to live, he could not possibly think at all, without intending to make the best use of them all. When he saw his stay so short in this world, he must needs think that this was not a world for him; and when he saw how near he was to another world, that was eternal, he must surely think it very necessary to be diligent in preparing himself for it. Now who but a madman can reckon that he has five years certain to come?

If we were to add twenty years to the five, which is in all probability more than will be added to the lives of many; what a poor thing is this! How small a difference is there between five and twenty-five years!

We can never make any true judgment of time as it relates to us, without considering the true state of our duration. If we are temporary beings, then a little time may justly be called a great deal in relation to us; but if we are eternal beings, then the difference of a few years is as nothing.

Suppose three different sorts of rational

beings, all of different but fixed duration; one sort that lived certainly only a month, the other a year, and the third a hundred years. Now if these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language; half an hour to those that were to live but a month, must be a very different thing, to what it is to those who are to live a hundred years. As therefore time is thus a different thing with regard to the state of those who enjoy it, so if we would know what time is with regard to ourselves, we must consider our state.

Since our eternal state is as certainly ours, as our present state; since we are as certainly to live for ever, as we now live at all; it is plain that we cannot judge of the value of any particular time, as to us, but by comparing it to that eternal duration for which we are created.

If you would know, what five years signify to a being that was to live a hundred, you must compare five to a hundred, and see what proportion it bears to it, and then you will judge right. So if you would know what twenty years signify to a son of Adam, you must compare it, not to a million of ages, but an eternal duration, to which no number of millions bears any proportion.

How would you condemn the folly of a man, who should lose his share of future glory, for the sake of being rich, or great, or praised, or delighted in any enjoyment, only one poor day before he was to die. But if the time will come

when years will seem less to every one, than a day does now; what a condemnation must it be, if eternal happiness should be lost, for something less than the enjoyment of a day!

Why does a day seem a trifle to us now? It is because we have years to set against it. It is the duration of years that makes it appear as nothing. What a trifle, therefore, must the years of a man's age appear, when they are forced to be set against eternity, when there shall be nothing but eternity to compare them with. Now this will be the case of every man, as soon as he is out of the body; he will be forced to forget the distinctions of days and years, and to measure time, not by the course of the sun, but by setting it against eternity.

As the fixed stars, by reason of our being placed at such distance from them, appear but as so many points; so when we are placed in eternity, shall look back upon all time, it will all appear but as a moment. Then a luxury, an indulgence, a prosperity, a greatness of fifty years, will seem to every one that looks back upon it, as the same poor, short enjoyment, as if he had been snatched away in his first sin.

These few reflections upon time, are only to show how poorly they think, and how miserably they act, who are less careful of an eternal state, because they may be at some years' distance from it, than they would be, if they knew they were within a few weeks of it.

CHAP. XIV.

OF EARLY PRAYER IN THE MORNING. HOW WE ARE TO IMPROVE OUR FORMS OF PRAYER, AND HOW TO INCREASE THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION.

HAVING in the foregoing chapters shown the necessity of a devout habit of mind in every part of our common life, in the discharge of all our business, in the use of all the gifts of God: I come now to consider that part of devotion, which relates to times and hours of prayer.

I take it for granted, that every Christian, who is in health, is up early in the morning; for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a laborer, or a tradesman, or a servant, or has business that wants him. We naturally conceive some abhorrence of a man that is in bed, when he should be at his labor, or in his shop. We cannot tell how to think any thing good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, as to neglect his business for it.

How odious therefore we must appear in the sight of Heaven, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep and darkness, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it.

Prayer is the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of him, that we are

The Christian's highest state. The poorest enjoyment.

capable of in this life. It is the noblest exercise of the soul, the most exalted use of our best faculties, and the highest estimation of the blessed inhabitants of heaven.

When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace, we are then in our highest state, we are upon the utmost heights of human greatness; we are not before kings and princes, but in the presence and audience of the Lord of all the world, and can be no higher, till death is swallowed up in glory.

On the other hand, sleep is the poorest, dullest refreshment of the body, and is so far from being intended as an enjoyment, that we are forced to receive it either in a state of insensibility, or in the folly of dreams. Among animals we despise them most, which are most drowsy. He therefore who chooses to enlarge the indulgence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions, chooses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the highest, noblest employment of the soul; he chooses that state, which is a reproach to mere animals, rather than that exercise, which is the glory of angels.

You will perhaps say, though you rise late, yet you are always careful of your devotions when you are up. It may be so. But what then? Is it well to rise late, because you pray when you are up? It is as much your duty to rise to pray, as to pray when you rise. And if you are late at your prayers, you offer to God

the prayers of an idle, slothful worshipper, that rises to prayers, as idle servants rise to their labor.

Farther, if you fancy that you are careful of your devotions, when you are up, though it be your custom to rise late, you deceive yourself; for you cannot perform your devotions as you ought. For he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, but must pass away good part of the morning in it, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting, abstinence, or any other self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform these duties; but he is no more disposed to enter into the true spirit of prayer, than he is disposed to fasting. Sleep thus indulged, gives a softness and idleness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing, but what suits with an idle state of mind, and gratifies our natural tempers. So that a person that is a slave to this idleness, is in the same temper when he is up; and though he is not asleep, yet he is under tne effects of it: and every thing that is idle, indulgent, or sensual, pleases him for the same reason that sleep pleases him. On the other hand, every thing that requires care, or trouble, or self-denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise. He that places any happiness in this morning indulgence, would be glad to have all the day made happy in the same manner; though

not with sleep, yet with such enjoyments as gratify and indulge the body in the same manner as sleep does.

Now you do not imagine that such a one can truly mortify that body which he thus indulges; yet you might as well think this, as that he can truly perform his devotions; or live in such a drowsy state of indulgence, and yet relish the joys of a spiritual life.

It is not possible for an epicure to be truly devout; he must renounce this habit of sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion.

Now he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt and disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of all devout and heavenly tempers, as he that turns the necessities of eating into a course of indulgence.

A person that eats and drinks too much, does not feel such effects from it, as those do who live in notorious instances of gluttony and intemperance; but yet his course of indulgence, though it be not scandalous in the eyes of the world, nor such as torments his own conscience, is a great and constant hinderance to his improvement in virtue; it gives him eyes that see not, and ears that hear not; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him incapable of entering into the true spirit of religion. Now this is the case of those who waste their time in sleep; it does not

disorder their lives, or wound their consciences, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but like any other more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into a state of dulness and sensuality.

If you consider devotion only as a time of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence; but if you consider it as a state of the heart, as the lively fervor of a soul, deeply affected with a sense of its own misery and infirmities, and desiring the spirit of God more than all things in the world, you will find that the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer, cannot subsist together. Mortification of all kinds, is the very life and soul of piety: but he that has not so small a degree of it, as to be able to be early at his prayers, can have little reason to think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ. What conquest has he got over himself—what right hand has he cut off—what trials is he prepared for—what sacrifice is he ready to offer unto God, who cannot rise to prayer at such time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labor?

Some people will tell you, that they indulge in sleep, because they have nothing to do. But such must be told, that they mistake the matter; that they have a great deal of business to do. They have a hardened heart to change. They

have the whole spirit of religion to get. For surely, he that thinks devotion to be of less moment than business or pleasure; or that he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may be justly said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.

Consider therefore not how small a crime it is to rise late, but consider how great a misery it is to want the spirit of religion; to have a heart not rightly affected with prayer; and to live in such softness and idleness, as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a truly Christian and spiritual life.

This is the right way of judging of the crime of wasting your time in bed.

When you read the Scriptures, you see a religion that is all life, and spirit, and joy in God; that supposes our soul risen from earthly desires, and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another body, another world, and other enjoyments. You see Christians represented as temples of the Holy Ghost, as children of the day, as candidates for an eternal crown, as watchful virgins, that have their lamps always burning in expectation of the bridegroom. But can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers?

If I were to desire you not to study the gratification of your palate, I would not insist much upon the crime of wasting your money in such a

way, though it be a great one; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality and indulgence, as renders you incapable of relishing religion. For the same reason, I do not insist much on the crime of wasting time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul; and is contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his apostles, the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been among men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

Here therefore we must fix our charge against this practice. We blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong. It is contrary to piety; not as accidental slips and mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner, as an ill habit of body is contrary to health.

On the other hand, if you were to rise early every morning, as a self-denial, as a means of redeeming time, and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find mighty advantages from it. This method, though it seems such a small circumstance of life, would in all probability be a means of great piety. It would keep it constant-

ly in your head, that softness and idleness were to be avoided, that self-denial was a part of Christianity. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and make you able by degrees to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul.

This one rule would teach you to think of others; it would dispose your mind to exactness, and be very likely to bring the remaining part of the day under rules of prudence and devotion.

He that is thus prepared for prayer, who rises with these dispositions, is in a very different state from him who has no rules of this kind: who rises by chance, as he happens to be weary of his bed, or is able to sleep no longer. If such an one prays only with his mouth; if his heart feels nothing of that which he says; if his prayers are only things of course; if they are a lifeless form of words, which he only repeats because they are soon said, there is nothing to be wondered at: for such dispositions are the natural effect of such a state of life.

Hoping, that you are convinced of the necessity of rising early to prayer, I shall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer.

CHAP. XV.

A METHOD OF DAILY PRAYER AND READING.

THE first thing that you are to do, when you are upon your knees, is to shut your eyes, and with a short silence let your soul place itself in the presence of God. That is, you are to use this, or some better method, to separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your heart as sensible as you can of the divine presence.

If you were to use yourself, as far as you can, to pray always in the same place; if you were to reserve that place for devotion, if any little room, or any particular part of a room was thus used, this kind of consecration of it, as a place holy unto God, would have an effect upon your mind, and dispose you to such tempers, as would very much assist your devotion. For by having a place thus sacred in your room, it would in some measure resemble a chapel, or house of God. This would dispose you to be always in the spirit of religion, when you were there; and fill you with wise and holy thoughts, when you were by yourself.

When you begin your petitions, use various expressions of the attributes of God, like these: "O Being of all beings, Fountain of all light and glory, gracious Father of men and angels, whose universal spirit is every where present,

giving life, and light, and joy, to all angels in heaven, and all creatures upon earth," &c.

When you direct any of your petitions to our blessed Lord, let it be in some expressions of this kind: "O Savior of the world; thou who art the Brightness of thy Father's glory, and the express Image of his Person; thou who art the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all things: thou who hast destroyed the power of the devil; thou who hast overcome death; thou who art entered into the holy of holies; who sittest at the right hand of the Father; who art high above all thrones and principalities, who makest intercession for all the world; thou who art the Judge of the quick and dead; thou who wilt speedily come down in thy Father's glory, to reward all men according to their works, be thou my light and my peace," &c.

Representations which describe so many characters of our Savior's nature and power, are not only proper acts of adoration, but will, if they are repeated with attention, fill our hearts with the highest fervors of true devotion.

Again, if you ask any particular grace of our blessed Lord, let it be in some manner like this:

"O holy Jesus, son of the most high God, thou who wast scourged at a pillar, stretched and nailed on a cross for the sins of the world, unite me to thy cross, and fill my soul with thy holy, humble, and suffering spirit. O Fountain of mercy, thou who didst save the thief upon the

cross, save me from the guilt of a sinful life: thou who didst cast seven devils out of Mary Magdalene, cast out of my heart all evil thoughts, and wicked tempers. O giver of life, thou who didst raise Lazarus from the dead, raise up my soul from the death and darkness of sin. Thou who didst give to thy apostles power over unclean spirits, give me power over mine own heart. Thou who didst appear unto thy disciples when the doors were shut, do thou appear to me in the secret apartment of my heart. Thou who didst cleanse the lepers, heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, cleanse my heart, heal the disorders of my soul, and fill me with heavenly light."

These appeals have a double advantage. They are so many proper acts of faith, whereby we not only show our belief of the miracles of Christ, but turn them at the same time into so many instances of worship and adoration. They also strengthen and increase the faith of our prayers, by presenting to our mind so many instances of that power and goodness, which we call upon for our own assistance.

When at any time, in reading the Scripture or any book of piety, you meet with a passage that more than ordinarily affects your mind, and seems to give your heart a new motion towards God, try to turn it into the form of a petition, and then give it a place in your prayers. By this means, you would be often improving your

prayers, and storing yourself with proper forms of making the desires of your heart known unto God.

At all the stated hours of prayer, it will be of great benefit to you, to have something fixed, and something at liberty, in your devotions. You should have some fixed subject, which is constantly to be the chief matter of your prayer at that particular time; and yet have liberty to add such other petitions, as your condition may then require.

For instance: as the morning is to you the beginning of new life; as God has then given you a new enjoyment of yourself, and a fresh entrance into the world, it is highly proper that your first devotions should be a praise and thanksgiving to God, as for a new creation; and that you should offer and devote body and soul, all that you are, and all that you have, to his service and glory.

Receive every day as a resurrection from death, as a new enjoyment of life; meet every rising sun with such sentiments of God's goodness, as if you had seen it, and all things, new created upon your account; and under the sense of so great a blessing, let your joyful heart, praise and magnify so good and glorious a Creator. Let therefore praise and thanksgiving, and oblation of yourself unto God, be always a part of your first prayers in the morning; and then add such other devotions, as the difference of

your state, or your heart, shall then make most expedient for you.

By the difference of our state, is meant the difference of our external state or condition, as of sickness, health, pains, losses, disappointments, troubles, particular mercies or judgments from God; and all sorts of kindnesses, injuries, or reproaches from other people. Now as these are great parts of our state of life, as they make great differences in it, by continually changing; so our devotion will be doubly beneficial to us, when it watches to receive and sanctify all these changes, and turns them all into occasions of such thanksgivings, such resignation, and such petitions as our present state more especially requires.

He that makes every change in his state a reason of presenting to God some particular petitions suitable to that change, will soon find, that he has taken an excellent means, not only of praying with fervor, but of living as he prays.

The next condition to which we are always to adapt some part of our prayers, is the difference of our hearts; by which is meant the different state of the tempers of our hearts, as of love, joy, peace, tranquillity; dulness of spirit, anxiety, discontent, envy and ambition, dark and disconsolate thoughts, resentments, fretfulness and peevish tempers. Now as these tempers, through the weakness of our nature will have their succession more or less, even in pious

minds; so we should constantly make the present state of our heart, the reason of some particular application to God.

By watching and attending to the present state of our hearts, and suiting some of our petitions exactly to their wants, we shall not only be well acquainted with the disorders of our souls, but also be well exercised in the method of curing them.

By this prudent and wise application of our prayers, we shall get all the relief from them that is possible; and the very changeableness of our hearts, will prove a means of exercising a greater variety of holy tempers.

Happy are they, who have this business and employment upon their hands! If people of leisure, who are so much at a loss how to dispose of their time, and are forced into poor contrivances, idle visits, and ridiculous diversions, merely to get rid of hours that hang heavily upon their hands—if such were to appoint some certain spaces of their time, to the study of devotion, searching after all the means and helps to attain a devout spirit—if they were to collect the best forms of devotion, to use themselves to transcribe the finest passages of Scripture prayers—if they were to collect the devotions, confessions, petitions, praises, resignations, and thanksgivings, which are scattered up and down in the Psalms, and range them under proper heads, as so much proper fuel for the flame of

their own devotion—if their minds were often thus employed, sometimes meditating upon them, sometimes getting them by heart, and making them as habitual as their own thoughts, how fervently would they pray!

How much better would it be, to make this benefit of leisure time, than to be dully and idly lost in the poor impertinences of a playing, visiting, wandering life!

How much better, to be thus teaching their souls to ascend to God, than to corrupt, bewilder and confound their hearts with the wild fancies, and lustful thoughts of lewd poets!

Though people of leisure seem called more particularly to this study of devotion, yet persons of much business or labor, must not think themselves excused from this or some better method of improving their devotion. For the greater their business is, the more need they have of some such method as this, to prevent its power over their hearts; to secure them from sinking into worldly tempers, and to preserve a sense and taste of heavenly things in their minds. And a little time regularly and constantly employed to any one use or end, will do great things, and produce mighty effects.

It is for want of considering devotion in this light, as something that is to be nursed and cherished with care, that is to be made part of our business, that is to be improved by art, and method, and a diligent use of the best helps;

that so many people are so little benefitted by it. For though the spirit of devotion is the gift of God, and not attainable by any mere power of our own, yet it is never withheld, from those, who by a wise and diligent use of proper means, prepare themselves for the reception of it.

It is amazing to see how eagerly men employ their parts, their sagacity, time, study, application, and exercise; how all helps are called to their assistance, when any thing is intended and desired in worldly matters; and how dull, negligent, and unimproved they are, how little they use their parts, sagacity, and abilities, to raise and increase their devotion!

Mundanus is a man of excellent parts, and clear apprehension. He is well advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business. Every part of trade and business that has fallen in his way, has had some improvement from him; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing any thing well, to its greatest height. Mundanus aims at the greatest perfection in every thing. He can tell you all the defects and errors in all the common methods, whether of trade, building, manufactures, or improving land. The clearness and strength of his understanding, which he is constantly improving, by continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying every thing every way, has rendered him a great master of most concerns in human life.

Thus has Mundanus gone on, increasing in knowledge and judgment, as fast as years came upon him. The one only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion. This is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only six years of age; and the old man prays now, in that little form of words, which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning.

Thus Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without considering how it might be made or used to better advantage, has gone all his life long praying in the same manner as when he was a child!

If Mundanus sees a book of devotion, he passes it by, as he does a spelling-book, because he remembers that he learned to pray so many years ago under his mother, when he learned to spell.

Now how poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment and understanding in every thing but that which is the whole wisdom of man! And how miserably do many people more or less imitate this conduct!

All this seems to be owing to a strange, infatuated state of negligence, which keeps people from considering what devotion is. For if they did but once reflect about it, they would

soon see that the spirit of devotion was like any other sense or understanding, that is only to be improved by study, care, application, and the use of such helps, as are necessary to make a man a proficient in any art or science.

Classicus is a man of learning, and versed in all the best authors of antiquity. He has read them so much, that he has entered into their spirit, and can very ingeniously imitate the manner of any of them. He is so great a friend to this improvement of the mind, that if he meets a young scholar, he never fails to advise him concerning his studies.

Classicus tells his young man, he must not think that he has done enough, when he has only learned languages; but that he must be daily conversant with the best authors; read them again and again, catch their spirit by living with them, and that there is no other way of becoming like them, or of making himself a man of taste and judgment.

How wise might Classicus have been, and how much good might he have done in the world, if he had but thought as justly of devotion, as he does of learning?

The two testaments would not have had so much as a place among his books, but that they are both to be had in Greek. Classicus thinks that he sufficiently shows his regard for the holy Scripture, when he tells you that he has no other book of piety besides them.

It is very well, Classicus, that you prefer the Bible to all other books of piety; he has no judgment, that is not thus far of your opinion. But if you will have no other book of piety besides the Bible, because it is the best, how comes it, Classicus, that you do not content yourself with one of the best books among the Greeks and Romans? How comes it that you are so greedy and eager after all of them? How comes it that you think the knowledge of one is a necessary help to the knowledge of the other? How comes it that you are so earnest, so laborious, and so expensive of time and money to restore broken periods and scraps of the ancients?

How comes it that you read so many commentators upon Cicero, Horace, and Homer, and not one upon the gospel? How comes it that your love of Cicero, and Ovid, makes you love to read an author that writes like them; and yet your esteem for the gospel gives you no desire, nay prevents your reading such books as breathe the very spirit of the gospel? You tell your young scholar, he must not content himself with barely understanding his authors, but must be continually reading them all, as the only means of entering into their spirit, and forming his own judgment according to them? Why then, must the Bible lie alone in your study? Is not the spirit of the holy followers of Christ, as good and necessary a means of

A general charge. The aim of Christianity.

entering into the spirit of the gospel as the reading of the ancients is of entering into the spirit of antiquity? Is the spirit of poetry only to be got by much reading of poets and orators? And is not the spirit of devotion to be got in the same way, by frequent reading the holy thoughts, and pious strains of devout men?

It is much to be lamented, that numbers of scholars are chargeable with this folly; so negligent of improving their devotion, and so desirous of other poor accomplishments, as if they thought it a nobler talent, to be able to write an epigram in the style of Martial, than to live and think, and pray to God, in the spirit of St. Augustin.

And yet to correct this temper, and fill a man with a quite contrary spirit, there seems to be no more required, than the bare belief of the truth of Christianity. If you should ask Mundanus and Classicus, or any man of business or learning, whether piety is not the highest perfection of man, or devotion the greatest attainment in the world, they must both answer in the affirmative, or else give up the truth of the gospel.

For as philosophy professes purely the search and inquiry after knowledge, so Christianity supposes, intends, desires, and aims at nothing else but the raising fallen man to a divine life, to such habits of holiness, such degrees of devotion, as may fit him to enter among the holy inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven.

He that does not believe this of Christianity, may be reckoned an infidel; and he that believes thus much, has faith enough to give him a right judgment of the value of things to support him in a sound mind, and enable him to conquer all the temptations which the world shall lay in his way.

CHAP. XVI.

OF CHANTING OR SINGING PSALMS IN OUR PRIVATE DEVOTIONS. OF THE EXCELLENCY AND BENEFIT OF THIS KIND OF DEVOTION. OF THE MEANS OF PERFORMING IT IN THE BEST MANNER.

I RECOMMEND not only as fit and proper to be done, but as such as cannot be neglected, without great prejudice to your devotions, that you begin all your prayers with a psalm. This is so right, is so beneficial to devotion, has so much effect upon our hearts, that it may be insisted upon as a common rule for all persons.

I do not mean that you should read over a psalm, but that you should chant or sing one of those psalms, which we commonly call the reading psalms. For singing is as much the proper use of a psalm, as devout supplication is the proper use of a form of prayer. And a psalm only read, is very much like a prayer that is only looked over.

Chanting. Difference between reading and singing.

The method of chanting a psalm, such as is used in some churches, is practicable by all persons. The change of the voice in thus chanting of a psalm is so small and natural, that every body is able to do it, and is yet sufficient to raise and keep up the gladness of our hearts.

There is nothing that so clears a way for your prayers, nothing that so disperses dulness of heart, nothing that so purifies the soul from poor and little passions, nothing that so opens heaven, or carries your heart so near it, as these songs of praise. They create a sense of delight in God, awaken holy desires, and teach you how to ask God to give. They kindle a holy flame; they turn your heart into an altar, your prayers into incense; and carry them as a sweet smelling savor to the throne of grace.

The difference between singing and reading a psalm, will easily be understood, if you consider the difference between reading and singing a common song that you like. While you only read it, you only like it, and that is all; but as soon as you sing it, you enjoy it, feel it, it has got hold of you, your passions keep pace with it, and you feel the same spirit within you, that there seems to be in the words.

If you were to tell a person who has such a song, that he need not sing it, that it was sufficient to peruse it, he would wonder what you mean; and would think you as absurd, as if you were to tell him, that he should only look at his

Talent for singing. Talent for thinking.

food, to see whether it was good, but need not eat it. A song of praise not sung, is very like any other good thing not made use of.

You will perhaps say, that singing is a particular talent, which belongs only to particular people, and that you have neither a voice nor ear for music. If you had said that singing is a general talent, and that people differ in that, as they do in all other things, you had said something much truer.

How vastly do people differ in the talent of thinking, which is not only common to all men, but seems to be the very essence of human nature! How readily do some people reason upon every thing: and how hardly do others reason upon any thing! How clearly do some people discourse upon the most abstruse matters, and how confusedly do others talk upon the plainest subjects! But no one desires to be excused from thought, or reason, or discourse, because he has not these talents as some people have them. Yet it is full as just, for a person to think himself excused from thinking upon God, or reasoning about his duty to him, or discoursing about the means of salvation, because he has not these talents in a high degree, as it is for a person to think himself excused from singing the praises of God, because he has not a fine ear, or a musical voice.

As it is speaking, and not graceful speaking, that is a required part of prayer; so it is

singing, and not artful fine singing, that is a required way of praising God. If a person was to forbear praying, because he had an odd tone in his voice; he would have as good an excuse as he has, who forbears from singing psalms, because he has but little management of his voice. And as a man's uttering his prayers, though in an odd tone, may yet sufficiently answer all the ends of his own devotion; so a man's singing of a psalm, though not in a very musical way, may sufficiently answer all the ends of rejoicing in and praising God.

This objection might be of some weight, if you were desired to sing, to entertain other people; but is not to be admitted in the present case, where you are only required to sing the praises of God, as a part of your own private devotion. If a person who has a very ill voice, and a bad way of speaking, was desired to be the mouth for a congregation, it would be a very proper excuse for him to say that he had not a voice, or a way of speaking that was proper for prayer. But he would be very absurd, if for the same reason he should neglect his own private devotions. This is exactly the case of singing psalms; you may not have the talent of singing, so as to be able to entertain other people, and therefore it is reasonable to excuse yourself from it. But if for that reason you should excuse yourself from this way of praising God, you would be guilty of a great absurdity: be-

cause singing is no more required for the music that is made by it, than prayer is required for the fine words that it contains; but as it is the natural and proper expression of a heart rejoicing in God. Our Savior and his apostles sung an hymn, but it may reasonably be supposed, that they rather rejoiced in God, than made fine music.

Do but so live, that your heart may truly rejoice in God, that it may feel itself affected with the praises of God, and then you will find, that this state of your heart, will neither want a voice, nor ear, to find a tune for a psalm. Every one at some time or other, finds himself able to sing in some degree; there are some times and occasions of joy, that make all people ready to express their sense of it in some sort of harmony. The joy that they feel, forces them to let their voices have a part in it. He, therefore, that says he wants a voice, or an ear, to sing a psalm, mistakes the case. He wants that spirit that really rejoices in God; the dulness is in his heart, and not in his ear; and when his heart feels a true joy in God, when it has a full relish of what is expressed in the psalm, he will find it very pleasant, to make the motions of his voice express the motions of his heart.

Singing indeed, as it is improved into an art, signifies the running of the voice through a certain compass of notes, and keeping time with a studied variety of changes, is not natural, nor

Scientific singing. Natural singing.

the effect of any natural state of the mind. In this sense, it is not common to all people, any more than those antic and invented motions, which make fine dancing, are common to all people. But singing, as it signifies a motion of the voice suitable to the motions of the heart, and the changing of its tone according to the meaning of the words which we utter, is as natural and common to all men, as it is to speak high when they threaten, or to speak low when they are dejected.

All men therefore are singers, in the same manner as all men think, speak, laugh, and lament. For singing is no more an invention, than grief or joy are inventions. Every state of the heart naturally puts the body into some state that is suitable to it, and is proper to show it to other people. If a man is angry, or disdainful, no one need instruct him how to express these passions by his tones. The state of his heart disposes him to a proper use of his voice.

Imagine to yourself, that you had been with Moses when he was led through the Sea; that you had seen the waters divide, and stand as a heap on both sides, till you had passed through, and then fall upon your enemies; do you think you should then have wanted a voice or an ear to have sung with Moses, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation," &c. ? Your own heart tells you, that all must have been singers upon that occasion

Singing the effect of joy. Joy the effect of singing.

Let this therefore teach you that it is the heart that tunes a voice to sing the praises of God; and that if you cannot sing these same words now with joy, it is because you are not so affected with the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ, as the Jews were, or you yourself would have been, with their deliverance at the Red Sea.

Let us now consider another reason for this kind of devotion. As singing is a natural effect of joy in the heart, so it has also a natural power of rendering the heart joyful.

The soul and body are so united, that they have each of them power over one another, in their actions. Certain thoughts and sentiments in the soul, produce certain motions or actions in the body; and on the other hand, certain motions and actions of the body, have the same power of raising such and such thoughts and sentiments in the soul. So that as singing is the natural effect of joy in the mind, so it is as truly a natural cause of raising joy in the mind.

As devotion of the heart naturally breaks out into outward acts of prayer, so outward acts of prayer are natural means of raising the devotion of the heart. It is thus in all states and tempers of the mind; as the inward state of the mind produces outward actions suitable to it, so those outward actions have the like power of raising an inward state of mind suitable to them. As anger produces angry words so angry words increase anger.

If therefore you would know the reason and necessity of singing psalms, you must consider the reason and necessity of praising and rejoicing in God; because singing psalms is as much the true exercise and support of the spirit of thanksgiving, as prayer is the true exercise and support of the spirit of devotion. And you may as well think, that you can be devout as you ought, without the use of prayer, as that you can rejoice in God as you ought, without the practice of singing psalms. Because this singing is as much the natural language of praise and thanksgiving, as prayer is the natural language of devotion.

The union of soul and body is not a mixture of their substances, as we see bodies united and mixed together, but consists solely in the mutual power that they have of acting upon one another.

It is the sole will of God that is the reason and cause of all the powers and effects which you see in the world. The sun gives light and heat, not because it has any natural power of so doing; but merely because it is the will of God. The eye is the organ or instrument of seeing, not because the skins, coats, and humors of the eye, have a natural power of giving sight. The ears are the organs or instruments of hearing, not because the make of the ear has any natural power over sounds, but merely because it is the will of God, that seeing and hearing should be thus received. So it is the sole will of God, and

not the nature of a human soul or body, that is the cause of this union betwixt the soul and the body.

If you rightly apprehend this short account of the union of the soul and body, you will see a great deal into the reason and necessity of all the outward parts of religion. This union of our souls and bodies is the reason both why we have so little and so much power over ourselves. It is owing to this union that we have so little power over our souls; for as we cannot prevent the effects of external objects upon our bodies; as we cannot command outward causes; so we cannot always command the inward state of our minds. Because, as outward objects act upon our bodies without our leave, so our bodies act upon our minds by the laws of the union of the soul and the body. Thus you see it is owing to this union, that we have so little power over ourselves.

On the other hand, it is owing to this union, that we have so much power over ourselves. For as our souls in a great measure depend upon our bodies; and as we have great power over our bodies; as we command our outward actions, and oblige ourselves to such habits of life, as naturally produce habits in the soul; as we can mortify our bodies, and remove ourselves from objects that inflame our passions; so, we have a great power over the state of our souls. Again, as we are masters of our outward actions; as we can force ourselves to outward acts of reading, praying, singing, and the like; and as all these

Too many outward means. Quietism.

bodily actions have an effect upon the soul, as they naturally tend to form such and such tempers in our hearts; so by being masters of these outward, bodily actions, we have great power over the state of the heart.

Now from this you may see the necessity and benefit of singing psalms, and of all the outward acts of religion. For if the body has so much power over the soul, it is certain that all such bodily actions as affect the soul, are of great weight in religion. Not as if there was any true worship or piety in the actions themselves, but because they are proper to raise and support that spirit, which is the true worship of God.

This doctrine may be easily carried too far; for by calling in too many outward means of worship, it may degenerate into superstition. On the other hand, some have fallen into the contrary extreme. For because religion is in the heart, some have pursued that notion so far, as to renounce vocal prayer, and other outward acts of worship; and have resolved all religion into a quietism, or mystic intercourse with God in silence. These extremes are equally prejudicial to true religion. I neither encourage quietism, by placing religion in the heart; nor superstition, by showing the benefit of outward acts of worship.

Since we are neither all soul, nor all body; seeing none of our actions are either separately of the soul, or separately of the body; seeing we

have no habits but such as are produced by the actions both of our souls and bodies, it is certain, that if we would arrive at habits of devotion, or delight in God, we must not only meditate, and exercise our souls, but we must practise our bodies to all such outward actions, as are conformable to these inward tempers.

I have been the longer upon this head, because of its great importance. For there is no state of mind so truly perfect as that of thankfulness to God; and consequently nothing is of more importance in religion, than that which exercises and improves this habit of mind.

Would you know who is the greatest saint? It is not he who prays most, or fasts most, who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice; but he who is always thankful to God, who wills every thing that God willeth, receives every thing as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.

All prayer, fastings, repentance, meditation, retirement, and ordinances, are but so many means to render the soul thus conformable to the will of God, and to fill it with praise for every thing. This is the perfection of all virtues; and all virtues that do not tend to it, or proceed from it, are but so many false ornaments of a soul not converted to God.

The shortest, surest way to all happiness, and all perfection, is to make it a rule to yourself, to

Singing not restricted to time or place.

praise God for every thing. For it is certain, that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could do no more for yourself, than by this thankful spirit, for it turns all that it touches into happiness.

Although this be the highest temper you can aim at, and the noblest sacrifice that the greatest saint can offer to God, yet it is not tied to any time, place, or occasion, but is always in your power, and may be the exercise of every day. The common events of every day are sufficient to discover and exercise this temper, and may plainly show you how far you are governed in all your actions by this thankful spirit. For this reason I exhort you to this method in your devotion, that every day may be made a day of thanksgiving, and that the spirit of discontent may be unable to enter into the heart.

It may perhaps after all be objected, that although the great benefit, and excellent effects of this practice are very apparent, yet it seems not altogether so fit for private devotions; since it can hardly be performed without making our devotions public to other people, and seems also liable to the charge of sounding a trumpet at our prayers.

It is therefore answered, 1. That great numbers of people have it in their power to be as private as they please; such persons therefore

are excluded from this excuse, which however it may be so to others, is none to them. Therefore let such take the benefit of this excellent devotion.

2. Numbers of people are by the necessity of their state, as servants, apprentices, prisoners, and families in small houses, forced to be continually in the presence or sight of somebody or other. Are such persons to neglect prayer, because they cannot pray without being seen? Are they not rather obliged to be more exact in them, that others may not be witnesses of their neglect, and so corrupted by their example?

Now what is here said of devotion, may surely be said of chanting a psalm, which is only a part of devotion. The rule is this; do not pray that you may be seen of men, but if your confinement obliges you to be always in the sight of others, be more afraid of being seen to neglect, than of being seen to have recourse to prayer.

3. Either people can use such privacy in this practice, as to have no hearers, or they cannot. If they can, then this objection vanishes as to them: and if they cannot, they should consider their confinement, and the necessities of their state, as the confinement of a prison; and then they have an excellent pattern to follow. They may imitate St. Paul and Silas, who sang praises to God in prison, though we are expressly told that the prisoners heard them. They therefore did not refrain from this kind of devotion for

The difference between having witnesses and seeking them.

fear of being heard by others. If therefore any one is in the same necessity, either in prison or out of prison, what can he do better, than to follow this example?

I cannot pass by this place of scripture, without desiring the pious reader to observe how strongly we are here called upon to this use of psalms, and what a mighty recommendation of it, the practice of these two great saints is. In their great distress, in prison, in chains, under the soreness of stripes, in the horror of night, they sang praises to God. And shall we, after this, need any exhortation to this holy practice? Shall we let the day pass without such thanksgivings as they would not neglect in the night? Shall a prison, chains and darkness, furnish them with songs of praise, and shall we have no singings in our closets?

4. The privacy of devotion is not destroyed by our having, but by our seeking witnesses. If therefore nobody hears you but those you cannot separate yourself from, you are as much in secret, and your Father who seeth in secret, will as truly reward your secrecy, as if you was seen by him alone.

5. Private devotion, as it is opposed to public, does not suppose that no one is to have any witness of it. For husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, masters and servants, tutors and pupils, are to be witnesses to one another, of such devotion as

may truly and properly be called private. It is far from being a duty to conceal such devotion from such near relations.

Our Lord commands us, when we fast, to "anoint our heads, and wash our faces, that we appear not unto men to fast, but unto our Father who is in secret." But this only means, that we must not make ostentation of our fasting. For if no one was to fast in private, or could be said to fast in private, but he who had no witnesses of it, no one could keep a private fast, but he who lived by himself: for every family must know who fasts in it. Therefore, the privacy of fasting does not suppose such a privacy as excludes every body from knowing it, but such a privacy as does not seek to be known abroad.

Cornelius, the devout centurion, of whom it is said, that he "gave much alms, and prayed to God alway," saith unto Peter, "Four days ago, I was fasting until this hour." Acts x. 2. Now that this fasting was sufficiently private and acceptable to God, appears from the vision of an angel, with which the holy man was blessed at that time.

As therefore the privacy or excellency of fasting is not destroyed by being known to some particular persons, neither would the privacy or excellency of your devotions be hurt, though by chanting a psalm you should be heard by some of your family.

The whole of the matter is this. A great part

of the world can be as private as they please, therefore let them use this excellent devotion between God and themselves.

Another great part of the world must and ought to have witnesses of several of their devotions; let them therefore not neglect the use of a psalm at such times as it ought to be known to those with whom they live, that they do not neglect their prayers. For surely, there can be no harm in being known to be singing a psalm, at such times as it ought to be known that you are at your prayers.

And if at other times you desire to be in such secrecy at your devotions, as to have nobody suspect it, and for that reason forbear your psalm; I have nothing to object against it.

CHAP. XVII.

HUMILITY.

I HAVE in the last chapter laid before you the excellency of praise and thanksgiving, and recommended that as the subject of your first devotions in the morning.

And because an humble state of soul is the very state of religion, because humility is the life and soul of piety, the foundation and support of every virtue and good work, the best guard and security of all holy affections; I shall re-

commend humility to you, as highly proper to be made the subject of your devotions, at the next early season of prayer; earnestly desiring you to think no day likely to end well, in which you have not early put yourself in this posture of humility, and called upon God to carry you through the day in the exercise of a meek and lowly spirit.

This virtue is so essential to the right state of our souls, that there is no pretending to a reasonable or pious life without it. We may as well think to see without eyes, or to live without breath, as to live in the spirit of religion, without the spirit of humility. And although it is thus the soul and essence of all religious duties, yet is it, generally speaking, the least understood, the least regarded, the least intended, the least desired and sought after, of all other virtues, among all sorts of Christians.

No people have more occasion to be afraid of the approaches of pride, than those who have made some advances in a pious life. For pride can grow as well upon our virtues as our vices, and steals upon us on all occasions. Every good thought that we have, every good action that we do, lays us open to pride, and exposes us to the assaults of vanity and self-satisfaction.

Humility does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve, or in abasing ourselves lower than we really are. But as all virtue is founded in truth, so humility is

founded in a true and just sense of our *weakness*, misery, and sin. He that rightly feels and lives in this sense of his condition, lives in humility.

1. The *weakness* of our state appears from our inability to do any thing of ourselves. In our natural state we are entirely without any power; we are indeed active beings, but can only act by a power, that is every moment lent us from God. We have no more power of our own to move a hand or stir a foot, than to move the sun, or stop the clouds. When we speak a word, we feel no more power in ourselves to do it, than we feel ourselves able to raise the dead. For we act no more within our own power, or by our own strength, when we speak a word, or make a sound, than the apostles acted within their own power, or by their own strength, when a word from their mouth cast out devils, and cured diseases. As it was solely the power of God that enabled them to speak to such purposes, so it is solely the power of God that enables us to speak at all.

We indeed find that we can speak, as we find that we are alive; but the actual exercise of speaking is no more in our own power, than the actual enjoyment of life.

Since we neither are, nor can do any thing of ourselves, to be proud of any thing that we are, or of any thing that we can do, and to ascribe glory to ourselves for these things, as our own ornaments, has the guilt both of stealing and

lying. It has the guilt of stealing, as it gives to ourselves those things which only belong to God. It has the guilt of lying, as it is the denying the truth of our state, and pretending to be something that we are not.

2. Another argument for humility, is founded in the *misery* of our condition.

Now the misery of our condition is, that we use the powers of our nature, to the torment and vexation of ourselves, and our fellow creatures.

God Almighty has entrusted us with the use of reason, and we use it to the disorder and corruption of our nature. We reason ourselves into all kinds of folly and misery, and make our lives the sport of foolish and extravagant passions: seeking after imaginary happiness in all kinds of shapes, creating to ourselves a thousand wants, amusing our hearts with false hopes and fears, using the world worse than irrational animals, envying, vexing and tormenting one another with restless passions, and unreasonable contentions.

Let any man but look back upon his own life, and see what use he has made of his reason, how little he has consulted it, and how less he has followed it—what foolish passions, what vain thoughts, what needless labors, what extravagant projects, have taken up the greatest part of his life—how foolish he has been in his words and conversation—how seldom he has done well with judgment, and how often he has been kept from doing ill by accident—how seldom he has been

able to please himself, and how often he has displeased others—how often he has changed his counsels, hated what he loved, and loved what he hated—how often he has been enraged and transported at trifles, pleased and displeased with the very same things, and constantly changing from one vanity to another; and he will see reason enough to confess, that pride was not made for man. Let him but consider, that if the world knew all that of him, which he knows of himself; if they saw what vanity and passions govern him, and what secret tempers sully and corrupt his best actions, he would have no more pretence to be honored and admired for his goodness and wisdom, than a rotten and distempered body to be loved and admired for its beauty and comeliness.

This is so true, and so known to the hearts of most people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them, than to have their hearts thus fully discovered to the eyes of all beholders. Perhaps there are very few people in the world, who would not rather choose to die, than to have all their secret follies, the errors of their judgments, the vanity of their minds, the falseness of their pretences, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasiness, hatreds, envies, and vexations, made known unto the world.

And shall pride be entertained in a heart thus conscious of its own miserable behavior? Shall a creature, that could not support himself under

the shame of being known to the world in his real state—shall such a creature, because his shame is only known to God, to holy angels, and his own conscience; shall he, in the sight of God and holy angels, dare to be vain and proud of himself?

3. In the *shame and guilt* of sin, we find still greater reason for humility.

No creature that had lived in innocence, would thereby have any pretence for self-honor and esteem; because as a creature, all that it is, or has, or does, is from God, and therefore the honor of all that belongs to it, is only due to God. But if a creature that is a sinner, and under the displeasure of the great Governor of all the world, and deserving nothing from him, but pains and punishments for the shameful abuse of his powers: if such a creature pretends to self-glory for any thing that he is or does, he can only be said to glory in his shame.

Now how monstrous and shameful the nature of sin is, is sufficiently apparent from that great atonement that is necessary to cleanse us from the guilt of it. Nothing less has been required to take away the guilt of our sins, than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Had he not taken our nature upon him, our nature had been for ever separated from God, and incapable of ever appearing before him.

And is there any room for pride or self-glory, while we are partakers of such a nature as this?

Have our sins rendered us so abominable and odious to Him that made us, that He could not so much as receive our prayers, or admit our repentance, till the Son of God made himself man, and became a suffering advocate for our whole race; and can we in this state pretend to high thoughts of ourselves? Shall we presume to take delight in our own worth, who are not worthy so much as to ask pardon for our sins, without the mediation and intercession of the Son of God?

Thus deep is the foundation of humility laid, in the deplorable circumstances of our condition; which shows that it is as great an offence against truth and reason, for a man in this state of things to lay claim to any degree of glory, as to pretend to the honor of creating himself. If a man will boast of any thing as his own, he must boast of his misery and sin; for nothing is his own but this.

Turn your eyes towards heaven, and fancy that you see what is doing there; that you see cherubim and seraphim, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, all united in one work; not seeking glory from one another, not laboring their own advancement, not contemplating their own perfections, not singing their own praises, not valuing themselves, and despising others, but all employed in one and the same work; all happy in one and the same joy; "casting down their crowns before the throne of God, giving glory, and honor, and power to him alone." Then

turn your eyes to the fallen world, and consider how unreasonable and odious it must be, for such poor worms, such miserable sinners, to take delight in their own fancied glories, while the highest and most glorious sons of heaven, seek for no other greatness, and honor, but that of ascribing all honor and greatness, and glory to God alone?

Pride is the disorder of the fallen world only; it has no place among other beings; it can only subsist where ignorance and sensuality, lies and falsehood, lusts and impurity reign.

These are the reflections which you are often to meditate upon, that you may thereby be disposed to walk before God and man in such a spirit of humility, as becomes the weak, miserable, sinful state of all who are descended from fallen Adam.

When you have by such general reflections as these, convinced your mind of the reasonableness of humility, you must not content yourself with this, as if you was therefore humbled, because your mind acknowledges the reasonableness of humility, and declares against pride. But you must immediately enter yourself into the practice of this virtue, like a young beginner, that has all of it to learn, and can learn but little at a time, and that with great difficulty. Consider, that you have not only this virtue to learn, but that you must be content, to proceed as a learner all your time, endeavoring after greater degrees of it, and

practising every day acts of humility, as you every day practise acts of devotion.

You would not imagine yourself to be devout, because in your judgment you approved of prayer, and often declared your mind in favor of devotion. Yet how many people imagine themselves humble enough for no other reason, but because they often commend humility, and make vehement declarations against pride?

Cæcus is a rich man, of good birth, and very fine parts, but he is fond of dress, curious in the smallest matters that can add any ornament to his person. He is haughty to his inferiors, is very full of every thing that he says or does, and never imagines it possible for such a judgment as his to be mistaken. He can bear no contradiction, and discovers the weakness of your understanding, as soon as you oppose him. He changes every thing in his house, his habit, and his equipage, as often as any thing more elegant comes in his way. Cæcus would have been very religious, but that he always thought he was so.

There is nothing so odious to Cæcus as a proud man; and the misfortune is, that in this he is so very quicksighted, that he discovers vanity in almost every body.

On the other hand, he is exceeding fond of humble and modest persons. Humility, says he, is so amiable a quality, that it forces our esteem wherever we meet with it. There is no possi-

bility of despising the meanest person that has it, or of esteeming the greatest man that wants it.

Cæcus no more suspects himself to be proud, than he suspects his want of sense. And the reason of it is, because he always finds himself in love with humility, and enraged at pride.

It is very true, Cæcus, you speak sincerely when you say you love humility, and abhor pride, but then take this along with you, that you only love humility, and hate pride, in other people. You never in your life thought of any other humility, or of any other pride, than that which you have seen in others.

The case of Cæcus is a common case; many people live in all the instances of pride, and indulge every vanity that can enter into their minds, and yet never suspect themselves to be governed by pride and vanity, because they know how much they dislike proud people, and how mightily they are pleased with the humble and modest, wherever they find them. All their speeches in favor of humility, and all their railings against pride, are looked upon as so many true exercises, and effects of their own humble spirit. Whereas in truth, these are so far from being proper acts, or proofs of humility, that they are great arguments of the want of it.

The fuller of pride any one is himself, the more impatient will he be at the smallest instances of it in other people. And the less humility any one has in his own mind, the more will he

demand, and be delighted with it in other people. You must therefore reckon yourself only so far humble, as you impose every instance of humility upon yourself, and never call for it in other people.

Now in order to do this, you need only consider, that pride and humility signify nothing to you, but so far as they are your own; that they do you neither good nor harm, but as they are the tempers of your own heart.

The loving of humility therefore is of no advantage to you, but so far as you love to see all your own thoughts, words and actions governed by it. And the hating of pride does you no good, but so far as you hate to harbor any degree of it in your own heart.

Now in order to set out well in the practice of humility, you must take it for granted, that you have all your life been more or less infected with pride. You should believe also, that you have reason to suspect its approaches in all your actions.

This is what most people, especially new beginners in a pious life, may with great truth think of themselves. For there is no one vice that is more deeply rooted in our nature, or that receives such constant nourishment from almost every thing that we think or do. There is hardly any thing in the world that we want or use, or any action or duty of life, but pride finds some means or other to take hold of it. So that at what time soever we begin to offer ourselves to God, we

can hardly be surer of any thing, than that we have a great deal of pride to repent of.

If therefore you find it disagreeable to your mind to entertain this opinion of yourself, and that you cannot put yourself among those that want to be cured of pride, you may be as sure, as if an angel from heaven had told you, that you have not only much, but all your humility to seek.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY IS MADE DIFFICULT BY THE GENERAL SPIRIT AND TEMPER OF THE WORLD.

Every person, when he first applies himself to the exercise of humility, must consider himself as a learner, that is, to learn something that is contrary to former tempers, and habits of mind, and which can only be got by daily and constant practice. He has not only as much to do, as he that has some new art or science to learn; but he has also a great deal to unlearn. He is to lay aside his own spirit, which has been a long while fixing and forming itself; he must forget, and depart from abundance of passions and opinions, which the fashion and spirit of the world has made natural to him.

He must lay aside his own spirit; because, as we are born in sin, so in pride, which is as nat-

ural to us as self love, and continually springs from it. And this is one reason why Christianity is so often represented as a new birth, and a new spirit. He must lay aside the opinions and passions which he has received from the world, because the fashion of the world, by which we have been carried away, as in a torrent, is in many respects contrary to humility.

According to the spirit and vogue of this world, there are many things that pass for great, honorable, and desirable, which yet are so far from being so, that the true greatness and honor of our nature consists in not desiring them.

To abound in wealth, to have fine houses and rich clothes, to be attended with splendor, to be beautiful, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow creatures, to command the obeisance of others, to be looked on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to live highly and magnificently, to eat and drink, and delight ourselves, these are the great, the honorable, the desirable things, to which the spirit of the world turns the eyes of all people. And many a man is afraid of standing still, and not engaging in the pursuit of these things, lest the same world should take him for a fool.

"If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world." "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ

in God." This is the language of the New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity; you are to be dead to the spirit and temper of the world, and live a new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding the clearness and plainness of these doctrines which thus renounce the world, great part of Christians live and die slaves to custom. How many swell with pride and vanity, for such things as they would not know how to value at all, but that they are admired in the world? Would a man take ten years more drudgery in business to add two horses more to his coach, but that he knows, that the world most admires a coach and four? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnished, or themselves meanly clothed, for this only reason, lest the world should make no account of them, and place them among low and mean people.

How often would a man have yielded to the haughtiness and ill nature of others, and show a submissive temper, but that he dares not pass for such a poor spirited man in the opinion of the world. Many a man would often drop a resentment, and forgive an affront, but that he is afraid, if he should, the world would not forgive him.

How many would practise Christian temperance and sobriety in its utmost perfection, were it not for the censure which the world passes upon such a life. Others have frequent inten-

tions of living up to the rules of Christian perfection, which they are frightened from, by considering what the world would say of them.

Thus do the impressions which we have received from living in the world enslave our minds, that we dare not attempt to be eminent in the sight of God, and holy angels, for fear of being little in the eyes of the world.

Hence arises the great difficulty of humility. It cannot subsist in any mind, but so far as it is dead to the world, and has parted with all desires of enjoying greatness and honors. So that in order to be truly humble, you must unlearn those notions which you have been all your life learning from this corrupt spirit of the world.

You can make no stand against the assaults of pride, the meek affections of humility can have no place in your soul, till you stop the power of the world over you, and resolve against obedience to its laws.

When you are once advanced so far, as to be able to stand still in the torrent of worldly fashions and opinions, and examine the worth and value of things which are admired in the world, you have gone a great way in the gaining of your freedom, and have laid a good foundation for the amendment of your heart. For as great as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a blind obedience, and we need only open our eyes, to get quit of its power.

Ask who you will, learned or unlearned, every

An admission. An argument.

one seems to know and confess, that the general temper and spirit of the world, is nothing else but humor, folly and extravagance. Who will not own, that the wisdom of philosophy, and the piety of religion, was always confined to a small number? And is not this expressly owning and confessing, that the common spirit and temper of the world, is neither according to the wisdom of philosophy, nor the piety of religion?

The world therefore seems enough condemned even by itself, to make it very easy for a thinking man to be of the same judgment.

I hope, therefore, you will not think it a hard saying, that in order to be humble, you must withdraw your obedience from the common spirit which gives laws to fops and coquettes, and form your judgments according to the wisdom of philosophy and the piety of religion. Who should be afraid of making such a change as this?

To lessen your fear and regard to the opinion of the world, think how soon the world will disregard you, and have no more thought or concern about you, than about the poorest animal that died in a ditch. Your friends, if they can, may bury you with some distinction, and set up a monument to let posterity see that your dust lies under such a stone; and when that is done, all is done. Your place is filled up by another, the world is just in the same state it was, you are blotted out of its sight, and as much forgotten

The most admired are soon forgotten

by the world as if you had never belonged to it.

Think upon the rich, the great, and the learned persons, that have made great figures, and been high in the esteem of the world; many of them died in your time, and yet they are sunk and lost, and gone, and as much disregarded by the world, as if they had been only so many bubbles of water. Think again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity, for their service and homage to a world, that thinks itself every whit as well without them, and is just as merry as it was when they were in it.

Is it therefore worth your while to lose the smallest degree of virtue, for the sake of pleasing so bad a master, and so false a friend? Is it worth your while to bow your knee to an idol, that so soon will have neither eyes, nor ears, nor a heart to regard you; instead of serving the great, and holy, and mighty God, that will make all his servants partakers of his own eternity? Will you let the fear of a false world, that has no love for you, keep you from the fear of that God, who has only created you, that he may love and bless you to all eternity?

Once more, you must consider what behavior the profession of Christianity requires of you, with regard to the world: this is plainly deliver ed in these words; "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present

evil world." Christianity, therefore, implies a deliverance from this world; and he that professes it, professes to live contrary to every thing, and every temper, that is peculiar to this evil world.

John declares this opposition to the world in this manner: "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God." This is the description of the followers of Christ; and it is proof enough that no people are to be reckoned Christians in reality, who in their hearts and tempers belong to this world. "We know," says the same apostle, "that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Christians therefore can no farther know that they are of God, than so far as they know that they are not of the world; that is, that they do not live according to the ways and spirit of the world. For all the ways, maxims, politics, and tempers of the world, lie in wickedness. He is only of God, or born of God in Christ Jesus, who has overcome this world, that is, who has chose to live by faith, and govern his actions by the principles of a wisdom revealed from God by Christ Jesus.

Paul takes it for a certainty so well known to Christians, that they are no longer to be considered as living in this world, that he argues from it, as from an undeniable principle, concerning the abolishing the rites of the Jewish law. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ

from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" Our blessed Lord himself has fully determined this point in these words: "They are not of this world, as I am not of this world." This is the state of Christianity with regard to this world. If you are not thus out of, and contrary to the world, you want the distinguishing mark of Christianity. You do not belong to Christ, but by being out of the world as he was out of it.

We may deceive ourselves, if we please, with vain and softening comments upon these words, but they are and will be understood in their first simplicity and plainness, by every one that reads them in the same spirit that our blessed Lord spoke them. And to understand them in any lower, less significant meaning, is to let carnal wisdom explain away that doctrine, by which itself was to be destroyed.

The state of Christianity implies nothing else but an entire, absolute conformity to that spirit which Christ showed in the mysterious sacrifice of himself upon the cross. Every man, therefore, is only so far a Christian as he partakes of this spirit of Christ. It was this that made Paul so passionately express himself, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ:" but why does he glory? Is it because Christ had suffered in his stead, and so excused him from all suffering? By no means. But it was because his Christian pro-

fession had called him to the honor of suffering with Christ, and of dying to the world under reproach and contempt, as he had done upon the cross. For he immediately adds, "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This you see was one reason of his glorying in the cross of Christ, because he had called him to a like state of death and crucifixion to the world.

Thus was the cross of Christ in St. Paul's days, the glory of Christians; not as it signified their not being ashamed to own a Master that was crucified, but as it signified their glorying in a religion, which was nothing else but a doctrine of the cross, that called them to the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of themselves, the same renunciation of the world, the same humility and meekness, the same patient bearing of injuries, reproaches, and contempts, and the same dying to all the greatness, honors, and happiness of the world, which Christ showed upon the cross.

The necessity of conformity to all that Christ did, and suffered upon our account, is very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture.

1. As to his sufferings, this is the only condition of our being saved by them, if "we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

2. As to his crucifixion. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him," &c. Here you see that unless our old man be really

crucified with him, the cross of Christ will profit us nothing.

3. As to the death of Christ, the condition is this; "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." If therefore Christ be dead alone—if we be not dead with him, we are sure, from this Scripture, that we shall not live with him.

4. As to the resurrection of Christ, the Scripture showeth us how we are to partake of the benefit of it: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Jesus said of his disciples, and in them of all true believers, "They are not of this world, as I am not of this world." Because all true believers conforming to the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, live no longer after the spirit and temper of this world, but their life is hid with Christ in God. This is the state of separation from the world, to which all orders of Christians are called. They must so renounce all worldly tempers, and be so governed by the things of another life, as to show, that they are truly and really crucified, dead, and risen, with Christ. And it is as necessary for all Christians to conform to this great change of spirit, and be thus in Christ new creatures, as it was necessary that Christ should suffer, die, and rise again for our salvation.

How high the Christian life is placed above

the ways of this world, is wonderfully described by Paul in these words: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea though we have known Christ after the flesh yet henceforth we know him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." He that feels the force and spirit of these words, can hardly bear any human interpretation of them. Henceforth, says he; that is, since the death and resurrection of Christ, the state of Christianity is become so glorious a state, that we do not even consider Christ himself as in the flesh upon earth, but as a God of glory in heaven; we know and consider ourselves not as men in the flesh, but as fellow members of a new society, that are to have all our hearts, our tempers, and conversation in heaven.

Now as it was the spirit of the world that nailed our blessed Lord to the cross; so every man that has the spirit of Christ, that opposes the world, as he did, will certainly be crucified by the world some way or other. For Christianity still lives in the same world that Christ did; and these two will be utter enemies, till the kingdom of darkness is entirely at an end.

Had you lived with our Savior as his true disciple, you had been hated as he was; and if you now live in his spirit, the world will be the same enemy to you now, that it was to him

then. "If ye were of the world," saith our blessed Lord, "the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these words, by considering them only as a historical description of something that was the state of our Savior and his disciples at that time. But this is reading the scriptures as a dead letter: for they describe with equal exactness the state of true Christians at this, and all other times to the end of the world.

You will perhaps say, that the world is now become Christian, at least that part of it where we live; and therefore the world is not to be considered in that state of opposition to Christianity, as when it was heathen.

It is granted, the world now professeth Christianity, but will any one say, that this Christian world is of the spirit of Christ? Are its general tempers the tempers of Christ? Are the passions of sensuality, self-love, pride, covetousness, ambition, and vain glory, less contrary to the spirit of the gospel, now they are among Christians, than when they were among heathens? Or will you say, that the tempers and passions of the heathen world are lost and gone?

Consider what you are to mean by the world. Now this is fully described to our hands by John. "All that is in the world, the lust of the

flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," &c. This is an exact and full description of the world. Will you say, that this world is become Christian? But the same world is now in being, and is the same enemy to Christianity, that was in the apostle's days. It was this world that John condemned, as being not of the Father; whether, therefore, it outwardly professes, or openly persecutes Christianity, it is still in the same state of contrariety to the true spirit and holiness of the gospel.

Indeed the world by professing Christianity, is so far from being a less dangerous enemy than it was before, that it has by its favors destroyed more Christians than ever it did by the most violent persecution.

We must therefore be so far from considering the world as in a state of less enmity and opposition to Christianity, than it was in the first times of the gospel, that we must guard against it as a greater and more dangerous enemy now, than it was in those times.

It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians, by its favors, riches, honors, rewards, and protections, than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutions. It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer considered as an enemy, and therefore the generality of people are easily

persuaded to resign themselves up to be governed and directed by it.

How many consciences are kept quiet, upon no other foundation, than because they sin under the authority of the Christian world! How many directions of the gospel lie disregarded; and how unconcernedly do particular persons read them; for no other reason, but because they seem disregarded by the Christian world? How many compliances do people make to the Christian world, without any hesitation or remorse; which, if they had been required of them by heathen, would have been refused, as contrary to the holiness of Christianity?

Who could be content in seeing how contrary his life is to the gospel, but because he sees that he lives as the Christian world does! Who that reads the gospel, would want to be persuaded of the necessity of great self-denial, humility, and poverty of spirit, but that the authority of the world has banished this doctrine of the cross?

There is nothing therefore, that a good Christian ought to be more suspicious of, or more constantly to guard against, than the authority of the Christian world.*

And all the passages of Scripture, which represent the world as contrary to Christianity, which require our separation from it as from a mammon of unrighteousness, a monster of

* In these remarks, the author means by "Christian world" *the public* in a Christian land.—Ed.

iniquity, are all to be taken in the same strict sense, in relation to the present world.

Christians had nothing to fear from the heathen world, but the loss of their lives; but the world become a friend, makes it difficult for them to save their religion. While pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, had only the authority of the heathen world, Christians were thereby made more intent upon the contrary virtues. But now they have the authority of the Christian world, private Christians are in the utmost danger.

There is hardly any possibility of saving yourself from the present world, but by considering it as the same wicked enemy to all true holiness, as it is represented to be in the scriptures; and by assuring yourself, that it is as dangerous to conform to its tempers and passions, now it is Christian, as when it was heathen.

Ask yourself, is the piety, humility and sobriety of the Christian world, the piety, humility and sobriety of the Christian spirit? If not, how can you be more undone by any world, than by conforming to that which is Christian?

In every order and station of life, whether of learning or business, either in church or state, you cannot act up to the spirit of religion without renouncing the general temper and behavior of those, who are of the same order and business as yourself. And though human prudence seems to talk wisely about the necessity of avoiding

particularities, yet he that dares not be so weak as to be *particular*, will be often obliged to avoid the most substantial duties of Christian piety.

These reflections will, I hope, help you to break through those difficulties, and resist those temptations, which the authority and fashion of the world have raised against the practice of humility.

CHAP. XIX.

THE EDUCATION WHICH MEN GENERALLY RECEIVE IN THEIR YOUTH, MAKES HUMILITY DIFFICULT. THE SPIRIT OF A BETTER EDUCATION, REPRESENTED IN THE CHARACTER OF PATERNUS.

ANOTHER difficulty in the practice of humility, arises from our education. We are, for the most part, corruptly educated, and then committed to take our course in a corrupt world; so that it is no wonder, if examples of great piety are so seldom seen. A great part of the world are undone, by being born and bred in families that have no religion; where they are made vicious and irregular, by being like those with whom they first lived.

But this is not the thing I now mean; the education that I here intend, is such as children generally receive from virtuous and sober parents, and learned tutors and governors.

The legitimate object of education.

Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instruction for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicine and physicians, so the change and disorder of our rational nature has introduced the necessity of education and tutors. And as the only end of the physician is, to restore nature to its own state; so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education therefore is to be considered as reason borrowed at second hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man the use of his reason.

As the instruction of every art or science is founded upon the discoveries, the wisdom, experience, and maxims of the several great men who have labored in it; so that wisdom, or right use of our reason, which young people should be called to by their education, is nothing else but the best experience and finest reasonings of men, who have devoted themselves to the study of wisdom, and improvement of human nature. All, therefore, that great saints and dying men, when the fullest of light and conviction, and after the highest improvement of their reason, have said of the necessity of piety, of the excellency of virtue, of their duty to God, of the emp

tiness of riches, of the vanity of the world; all the sentences, judgments, reasonings and maxims of the wisest of philosophers, when in their high est state of wisdom, should constitute the com mon lessons of instruction for youthful minds.

The youths who attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Epictetus, were thus educated. Their every-day instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties—upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God, the beauty of virtue, and its agreeableness to the divine nature—upon the dignity of reason, the necessity of temperance, fortitude and generosity, and the shame and folly of indulging our passions.

As Christianity has new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy and desirable, in its true light; so one would expect, that the education of youth should be as much bettered and amended by Christianity, as the faith and doctrines of religion are amended by it.

An education under Pythagoras, or Socrates, had no other end, but to teach youth to think, judge, act, and follow such rules of life, as Pythagoras and Socrates used. And is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, but to teach youth how to think, and judge, and act, and live accord ing to the strictest laws of Christianity.

At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching of youth to begin their lives in such abstinence, sobriety, humility and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but an hundred times more regarded, than any, or all things else.

But alas, modern education is not of this kind. The first temper that we try to awaken in children, is pride; as dangerous a passion as that of lust. We stir them up to vain thoughts of themselves, and do every thing we can to puff up their minds with a sense of their own abilities. Whatever way of life we intend them for, we stir them up to action from principles of strife, ambition, glory, envy, and a desire of distinction.

We repeat and inculcate these motives upon them, till they think it a part of their duty to be proud, envious, and vain-glorious of their own accomplishments. And when we have taught them to scorn to be out-done by any, to bear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, and to be content with nothing but the highest distinctions; then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youths of such a glorious spirit.

If the youth is intended for a trade, we bid him look at rich men of the same trade, and consider how many now are carried about in their coaches, who began in the same low degree as he now does. We awaken his ambition, and endeavor

to give his mind a right turn, by often telling him how very rich such and such a tradesman died. If he is to be a lawyer, then we set great counsellors, judges, and chancellors, before his eyes. We tell him what great fees, and great applause attend fine pleading. We exhort him to take fire at these things, to raise a spirit of emulation in himself, and to be content with nothing less than the highest honors of the profession.

That this is the nature of our best education, is too plain to need any proof; and I believe there are few parents, but would be glad to see these instructions daily given to their children.

And after all this, we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to see grown men acted and governed by ambition, envy, scorn, and a desire of glory; not considering that they were all the time of their youth, called upon to all action and industry upon the same principles.

Now if a youth is ever to be so far a Christian as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility, I would fain know at what time he is to begin it at all, and why we train him up in tempers quite contrary to it?

How dry and poor must the doctrine of humility sound to a youth, that has been spurred to all his industry by ambition, envy, emulation, and a desire of distinction? And if he is not to act by these principles when he is a man, why do we call him to act by them in his youth?

Envy is acknowledged to be the most ungen-

erous, base, and wicked passion, that can enter into the heart of man. And is this a temper to be instilled, nourished, and established, in the minds of young people?

I know it is said, that it is not envy, but emulation, that is intended to be awakened in the minds of young men. But this is vainly said. For when children are taught to bear no rival, and to scorn to be out-done by any of their age, they are plainly and directly taught to be envious. It is impossible for any one to have this scorn of being out-done, and this contention with rivals, without burning with envy against all those that seem to excel him, or get any distinction from him. So that what children are taught, is rank envy, only covered with a name of a less odious sound.

If envy is thus confessedly bad, and it be only emulation that is endeavored to be awakened in children, surely there ought to be great care taken, that children may know the one from the other, that they may abominate the one as a great crime, while they give the other admission into their minds.

But if this were to be attemped, the fineness of the distinction between envy and emulation, would show that it was easier to divide them in words, than to separate them in action. For emulation, when it is defined in its best manner, is nothing else but a refinement upon envy, or rather the most plausible part of that venomous

passion. And though it is easy to separate them in the notion, yet the most acute philosopher, that understands the art of distinguishing ever so well, if he give himself up to emulation, will certainly find himself deep in envy.

Envy is not an original temper, but the natural, unavoidable effect of emulation, or desire of glory. So that he who establishes the one in the mind, necessarily fixes the other there. And there is no possible way of destroying envy, but by destroying a desire of glory.

It is said in defence of this method of education, that ambition is necessary to excite young people to industry; and that if we were to press humility upon them, we should deject their minds, and sink them into dulness. But those who say this, do not consider, that this reason is full as strong against pressing humility upon men.

Who does not see that men want as much the assistance of pride, ambition, and vain-glory, to spur them up to action and industry, as children? It is very certain, that the precepts of humility are more contrary to the designs of such men, and more grievous to their minds, when pressed upon them, than they are to the minds of young persons.

Let those who think that children would be spoiled, if they were not thus educated, consider this—If any children had been educated by our blessed Lord, or his holy apostles, would their minds have been sunk into dulness and idleness?

Would not such children have been trained up in the profoundest principles of a strict and true humility? Can they say that our blessed Lord, who was the meekest and humblest man that ever was on earth, was hindered by his humility from being the greatest example of worthy and glorious actions, that ever were done by man?

Such reflections are sufficient to expose all the poor pretences for an education in pride and ambition.

Paternus lived about two hundred years ago; he had but one son, whom he educated himself in his own house. As they were sitting together in the garden, when the child was ten years old, Paternus thus spoke to him.

The little time that you have been in the world, my child, you have spent wholly with me; and my love and tenderness to you, has made you look upon me as your only friend and benefactor, and the cause of all the comfort and pleasure that you enjoy. Your heart, I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the last day that I should live with you. But, my child, you are now in the hands, and under the care of a much greater Father and Friend than I am, whose love to you is far greater than mine, and from whom you receive such blessings as no mortal can give.

The God whom you have seen me daily worship; whom I daily call upon to bless both you and me, and all mankind; whose wondrous acts

are recorded in those scriptures which you constantly read—the God who created the heavens and the earth; who brought a flood upon the whole world; who was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom Job blessed in the greatest afflictions; who delivered the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians; who was the protector of righteous Joseph, Moses, Joshua and Daniel; who sent so many prophets into the world; who sent his son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind:—This God, with whom the spirits of departed good men now live, whom infinite numbers of angels now worship in heaven; is your loving Father and Friend, from whom, and not from me, you received your being.

I myself am not half the age of this shady oak, under which we sit; our fathers have sat under its boughs, we have all of us called it ours in our turn, though it stands, and drops its masters, as it drops its leaves. You see my son, this wide firmament over our heads, where the sun and moon, and all the stars appear in their turns. If you were to be carried up to any of these bodies at this vast distance from us, you would still discover others as much above, as the stars you see are above the earth.

My child, so great is God, that all these bodies added together are but as a grain of sand in his sight. Yet you are as much the care of this great God and Father of all worlds, and all spirits, as if he had no son but you, or there were

no creature for him to love and protect but you alone. He numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you sleeping and waking, and has preserved you from a thousand dangers, which you and I cannot perceive.

How poor my power is, and how little I am able to do for you, you have often seen. Your late sickness has shown you how little I could do for you in that state. I can bring you food and medicine, but have no power to turn them into your relief and nourishment. It is God alone that can do this for you.

Therefore, my child, fear and worship, and love God. Take him for your Lord and Father and Friend; look up unto him as the fountain and cause of all the good that you have received through my hands, and reverence me only as the bearer of God's good things unto you. And He that blessed my father before I was born, will bless you when I am dead.

Your little mind is only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you think there is no happiness out of it. But my child you belong to a greater family than mine; you are a younger member of the family of this Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of angels, and numberless generations of men, to be fellow members of one and the same society in heaven.

You do well to reverence and obey my authority, because God has given me power over you

to bring you up in his fear. I shall in a short time die, and leave you to God, and yourself; and if God forgive my sins, I shall go to his son Jesus Christ, and live among patriarchs and prophets, saints and martyrs. Therefore, my child, meditate on these great things, and it will tend to make your soul grow great and noble.

As you have been used to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do any thing, unless you first knew my will; so let it now be a rule of your life, to look up to God in all your actions, to do every thing in his fear, and to abstain from every thing that is not according to his will. Bear him always in your mind, teach your thoughts to reverence him in every place, for there is no place where he is not.

God, my child, is all love, and wisdom, and goodness. Therefore you cannot please God, but so far as you strive to walk in love, wisdom and goodness. When you love that which God loves, you act with him, you join yourself to him; and when you love what he dislikes, then you oppose him, and separate yourself from him.

First of all, my child, worship and adore God, think of him magnificently, speak of him reverently, magnify his providence, adore his power, frequent his service, and pray to him constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbor, (which means all mankind,) with such tenderness and affection, as you love yourself. Think how God loves

mankind, how merciful he is to them, how tender he is of them, how carefully he preserves them, and then strive to love the world as God loves it.

God would have all men to be happy, therefore do you desire the same. All men are great instances of divine love, therefore let all men be instances of your love.

My son, mark this; never do any thing through strife, or envy, or emulation, or vain glory. Never do any thing in order to excel other people, but in order to please God, and because it is his will, that you should do every thing in the best manner that you can. For if it be once a pleasure to you to excel other people, it will by degrees become a pleasure to you, to see other people not so good as yourself.

Banish therefore every thought of self-distinction, and accustom yourself to rejoice in all the excellences and perfections of your fellow creatures, and be as glad to see any of their good actions, as your own. For as God is as well pleased with their good doings as with yours, so you ought to desire, that every thing that is wise, and holy, and good, may be performed in as high a manner by other people, as by yourself.

Let this be your only motive to all actions, to do every thing in as perfect a manner as you can, because it is pleasing to God. When I am dead, my son, you will be master of my estate, which will be more than the necessities of one

family require. Therefore, be charitable to the souls of men, and wish them the same happiness with you in heaven, and be charitable to their bodies, and endeavor to make them happy upon earth. Do good, first to those that most deserve it, but remember to do good to all. The greatest sinners receive daily instances of God's goodness; he nourishes and preserves them, that they may repent, and return to him; therefore imitate God, and think no one too bad to receive your kindness, when you see that he wants it.

Study how to fill your heart with the love of God, and the love of your neighbor, and be con tent to be no deeper a scholar, no finer a gentleman, than these tempers will make you. As true religion is nothing else but simple nature governed by right reason, so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life. Avoid, therefore, all superfluous finery and equipage, and let your house be plainly furnished with moderate conveniences. Do not consider what your estate can afford, but what right reason requires.

Let your dress be sober, clean, and modest, not to set out the beauty of your person, but to declare the sobriety of your mind, that your outward garb may resemble the inward plainness and simplicity of your heart. For it is highly reasonable, that you should appear outwardly such as you are inwardly. As to meat and drink, observe the highest rules of Christian temperance

and sobriety. Consider your body only as the servant of your soul; and only nourish it, as it may best perform an obedient service to it.

But, my son, observe this as a principal thing, which I shall remind you of as long as I live with you. Hate and despise all human glory, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest snare and the greatest betrayer that you can possibly admit into your heart. Love humility in all its instances, practise it in all its parts, for it is the noblest state of the soul of man.

Let every day be a day of humility, condescend to all the weakness and infirmities of your fellow creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellences, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendships, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.

Aspire after nothing but your own purity, perfection, and usefulness; and have no ambition but to do every thing in so reasonable and religious a manner, that you may be glad that God is every where present, and sees and observes all your actions. The greatest trial of humility, is a humble behavior towards your equals in age, estate, and condition of life. Therefore be careful of all the motions of your heart towards these. Let all your behavior towards them be

governed by unfeigned love. Have no desire to put any of your equals below you, nor any anger at those that would put themselves above you. If they are proud, they are ill of a very bad distemper; let them therefore have your tender pity, and perhaps your meekness may prove an occasion of their cure. But if your humility should do them no good, it will however be the greatest good that you can do to yourself.

Remember that there is but one man in the world, with whom you are to have perpetual contention, and be always striving to exceed him, and that is yourself.

The time of practising these precepts, my child, will soon be over with you, the world will soon slip through your hands, or rather you will soon slip through it. It seems but the other day since I received these same instructions from my dear father, that I am now leaving with you. And the God that gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive what my father said unto me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and follow the same instructions.

Thus did Paternus educate his son.

Can any one think that such an education would weaken and deject the minds of young people, and deprive the world of any worthy and reasonable labors? It is so far from that, that there is nothing so likely to ennoble the mind, and prepare it for the most heroic exercise of all virtues. Who will say, that a love of God, a

desire of pleasing him, a love of our neighbor, a love of truth, reason and virtue, a contemplation of eternity and the rewards of piety, are not stronger motives to great and good actions, than a little uncertain popular praise?

On the other hand, there is nothing in reality that more weakens the mind, and reduces it to meanness and slavery:—nothing which makes it less master of its own actions, or less capable of following the dictates of reason, than a love of praise and honor. For as praise and honor are often given where they are not due; as that is generally most praised and honored, that most gratifies the humors, fashions, and vicious tempers of the world; so he that acts upon the desire of applause, must part with every other principle. He must say black is white, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and do the meanest, basest things, in order to be applauded.

So that to educate children upon a motive of emulation, or a desire of glory, in a world where glory itself is false, and commonly given wrong, is to give them a bias which will oftener carry them to base and mean, than to great and worthy actions.

CHAP. XX.

THE METHOD OF EDUCATING DAUGHTERS, MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO ENTER INTO THE SPIRIT OF HUMILITY. HOW MISERABLY THEY ARE INJURED BY SUCH AN EDUCATION. A BETTER EDUCATION REPRESENTED IN THE CHARACTER OF EUSEBIA.

THE right education of the female sex is of the utmost importance to human life. There is nothing more desirable for the common good of all the world. For though women do not carry on the business of the world, yet as mothers, and mistresses of families, that have for some time the care of the education of their children of both sorts, and are entrusted with that which is of the greatest consequence to human life. For this reason, good or bad women are likely to do as much good or harm in the world, as men.

We call our first language our mother tongue. So we may call our first tempers our mother-tempers; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget the language, than to part entirely with those tempers which we learned in the nursery. It is therefore much to be lamented, that this sex, on whom depends the first forming both of our bodies and our minds, are not only educated in pride, but in the silliest and most contemptible part of it.

They are not indeed suffered to dispute with us the prizes of art and science, of learning and eloquence, in which I suspect they would often

prove our superiors; but we turn them over to the study of beauty and dress, and the world conspires to make them think of little else. Fathers and mothers, friends, and relations, seem to have no other wish towards the little girl, but that she may have a fair skin, a fine shape, dress well, and dance to admiration.

What makes this matter still more to be lamented, is, that women are not only spoiled by this education, but we spoil that part of the world, which would otherwise furnish most instances of eminent and exalted piety. For it may be affirmed, that for the most part there is a finer sense, a clearer mind, a readier apprehension, and gentler dispositions, in that sex, than in the other. All these tempers, if they were truly improved by proper methods of education, would carry them to greater heights of piety than are to be found among the generality of men.

I speak of this matter with openness and plainness, because it is much to be lamented, that persons naturally qualified to be great examples of piety, should, by an erroneous education be made poor spectacles of the greatest vanity.

Females should consider, that the friends to their vanity are no friends of theirs. They should consider, that they are to live for themselves, that they have as great a share in the rational nature as men have; that they have as much reason to aspire after the highest accomplishments of solid virtue, as the gravest among Chris-

tian philosophers. They should consider that they are abused and betrayed from their only perfection, when they are taught that any thing is an ornament in them, that is not an ornament in the wisest among mankind.

It is generally said that women are naturally of little and vain minds. But this I look upon to be as false and unreasonable, as to say, that butchers are naturally cruel; whose cruelty is not owing to their nature, but to their way of life. Whatever littleness and vanity is to be observed in women, is like the cruelty of butchers, a temper wrought into them by that life which they are taught to lead. At least we must not charge any thing upon their nature, till we take care that it is not perverted by education.

Matilda is a fine woman, of good breeding, and great sense, and much of what is commonly called religion. She has three daughters that are educated by herself. She will not trust them with any one else, or at any school, for fear they should learn any thing ill. She stays with the dancing-master all the time he is with them, because she will hear every thing that is said to them. She has heard them read the scriptures so often, that they can repeat much of it without book: and there is scarcely a good book of devotion, but you may find in their closets.

Had Matilda lived in the first ages when Christianity was practised in the fulness and plainness of its doctrines, she had in all probability been

one of its greatest saints. But as she was born in corrupt times, where she wants examples of Christian perfection, and hardly ever saw a piety higher than her own; so she has many defects, and communicates them all to her daughters.

Her daughters see her great zeal for religion, but then they see an equal earnestness for finery. They see she is not negligent of her devotion, but then they see her more careful to preserve her complexion, and to prevent those changes with which time and age threaten her.

They are afraid to meet her, if they have missed attending public worship; but they are more afraid to see her, if they are not laced as straight as they can possibly be.

The children see so plainly the temper of their mother, that to gain her favor, they affect to be even more pleased with dress, and to be more fond of little ornaments than they really are.

They saw their eldest sister once brought to tears, and her perverseness severely reprimanded, for presuming to say, that she thought it was better to cover the neck, than to go so far naked as the custom required.

She stints them in their meals, and is very scrupulous of what they eat and drink, and tells them how many fine shapes she has seen spoiled in her time for want of such care. If a pimple rises in their faces, she is in a great fright, and they themselves are as afraid to see her with it, as if they had committed some great sin

The health injured. Bad marriage.

Whenever they begin to look sanguine and healthy, she calls in the assistance of the doctor; and if physic, or issues, will keep the complexion from inclining to be coarse or ruddy, she thinks them well employed.

By this means they are pale, sickly, infirm creatures, crying at small accidents, swooning away at any thing that frights them, and hardly able to bear the weight of their best clothes.

The eldest daughter lived as long as she could under this discipline, and died in the twentieth year of her age. When the body was opened, it appeared that her ribs, liver, and other inward parts were much hurt by being crushed together with her corsets.

Her youngest daughter has run away with a gamester, a man of great beauty, who in dressing and dancing has no superior. Matilda says, she should die with grief at this accident, but that her conscience tells her, she has contributed nothing to it herself. She appeals to their closets, to their books of devotion, to testify what care she has taken to establish her children in a life of solid piety and devotion.

Now though I do not intend to say, that no daughters are brought up in a better way than this, for I hope many are; yet I believe that the greater part of them are not brought up so well, or accustomed to so much religion, as in the present instance. Their minds are turned as much to the care of their beauty and dress, and the

indulgence of vain desires, as in the present case, without having such rules of devotion to stand against it. So that if piety, humility, and a sober sense of themselves, is much wanted in that sex, it is the plain and natural consequence of a vain and corrupt education.

If they are often too ready to receive the fops, and fine dancers, for their husbands; it is no wonder they should like that in men, which they have been taught to admire in themselves. And if they are often seen to lose what little religion they were taught in their youth, it is no more to be wondered at, than to see a little flower choaked and killed among rank weeds.

Those who judge hastily, may say, that I am exercising too great severity against the sex. But more reasonable persons will observe, that I spare the sex, and only arraign their education. I not only spare them, but plead their interest, assert their honor, and set forth their perfections.

Their education I cannot spare; but the only reason is because it is their greatest enemy, because it deprives the world of so many blessings, and the church of so many saints.

If any one would know, how generally women are hurt by this education; if he imagines there may be no personal pride, or vain fondness of themselves, in those who are patched and dressed out with so much glitter of art and ornament, let him only make the following experiment wherever he pleases. Let him acquaint any

such woman with his opinion of her. I do not mean that he should tell her to her face, or do it in any rude public manner; but let him contrive the most civil, secret, friendly way just to let her know his opinion, that he thinks she is neither handsome, nor dresses well, nor becomes her finery; and I dare say, he will find there are very few women, who will not like him the less for his opinion, though known to none but themselves. And he will not be long without seeing the effects of her resentment.

Though it is hard to judge of the hearts of people, yet where they declare their resentment, and uneasiness at any thing, there they pass judgment upon themselves. If a woman cannot forgive a man who thinks she has no beauty, nor any ornament from her dress, she infallibly discovers the state of her own heart, and is condemned by her own, and not another's judgment. For we never are angry at others, but when their opinions of us are contrary to that which we have of ourselves. A man that makes no pretence to scholarship, is never angry at those who do not take him to be a scholar. So if a woman had no opinion of her own person and dress, she would never be angry at those, who are of the same opinion with herself.

How possible it is to bring up daughters in a more excellent way, let the following character declare.

Eusebia is a pious widow, and has a good

estate for five daughters, whom she carefully brings up for God.

She, with her daughters, and her maids, meet together for prayer at stated hours, and chant psalms and other devotions, and spend all the rest of their time in good works, and innocent diversions. She loves them as her spiritual children, and they reverence her as their spiritual mother, with an affection far above that of the fondest friends. She has divided part of her estate among them, that every one may be charitable out of their own stock. She brings them up to all kinds of labor proper for women; not for their amusement, but that they may be serviceable to themselves and others, and be saved from those temptations which attend an idle life. She tells them, she had rather see them reduced to the necessity of maintaining themselves by work, than to have riches to excuse themselves from labor. For though, says she, you may be able to assist the poor without labor, yet by your labor you will be able to assist them more.

As to worldly cares, they are most of them of our own making, and fall away as soon as we know ourselves.

If a person in a dream is disturbed with strange appearances, his trouble is over as soon as he is awake. Now when a knowledge of ourselves enters into our minds, it makes as great a change in all our thoughts and apprehensions, as when we awake from a dream.

Strange fancies. We are spirits.

We acknowledge a man to be mad or melancholy, who fancies himself to be glass, and so is afraid of stirring; or taking himself to be wax, dare not let the sun shine upon him. But, my children, there are things in the world which pass for wisdom, politeness, grandeur, happiness, and fine breeding, which show as great ignorance of ourselves, and might as justly pass for thorough madness, as when a man cherishes these fancies. A woman who dares not appear in the world without fine clothes, who thinks it a happiness to have a fine face, to have a delicate skin, who had rather die than be reduced to poverty, and be forced to work for a poor maintenance, is to the full, as ignorant of herself, as he who fancies himself to be glass.

For this reason, all my discourse with you has been to acquaint you with yourselves, and to accustom you to such books and devotions, as may best instruct you in this greatest of all knowledge.

Though you were born of my body, and bear your father's name, yet you are pure spirits. I do not mean that you have not bodies that want meat and drink, and sleep, and clothing, but that all that deserves to be called *you*, is nothing else but spirit. A being spiritual and rational in its nature—that is as contrary to all corporeal beings, as life is contrary to death—that is made in the image of God, to live for ever, never to cease any more, but to enjoy life, and reason, and knowledge, and happiness in the presence of

God, and the society of glorified spirits, to all eternity.

Every thing that you call yours, besides this spirit, is but like your clothing—something that is only to be used for awhile, and then to wear out and die, and to signify no more to you, than the clothing and bodies of other people.

But, my children, you are not only spirits, but you are fallen spirits, that began your life in a state of corruption and disorder, full of tempers and passions, that blind and darken the reason of your mind and incline you to that which is hurtful. Your bodies are not only poor and perishing like your clothes, but they are like infected clothes, that fill you with distempers, and oppress the soul with sickly appetites and vain cravings.

Christians, therefore, have, as it were, two hearts within them. With the one, they see, and taste, and admire reason, purity and holiness. with the other they incline to pride, vanity, and sensual delights.

This internal war we always feel more or less; and if you would know the one thing necessary to all the world, it is this;—to preserve and perfect all that is rational and divine in our nature, and to mortify, remove, and destroy all that vanity, pride, and sensuality, which springs from the corruption of our state.

The world is in a great dream, and but few people are awake in it. We fancy that we fall

into darkness, when we die; but, alas! most of us are in the dark till then; and the eyes of our souls begin to see, only when our bodily eyes are closing.

You see then your state, my children. You are to honor, improve, and perfect the soul. You are to prepare it for the kingdom of heaven, to nourish it with the love of God, and of virtue, to adorn it with good works, and to make it as holy and heavenly as you can. You are to preserve it from the errors and vanities of the world; to save it from the corruptions of the body, and from false delights, and sensual tempers.

You are to nourish your spirits with pious readings and meditations, with watchings, fastings, and prayers, that you may taste and relish, and desire that eternal state, which is to begin when this life ends.

As to your bodies, you are to consider them as poor, perishing things, that are sickly and corrupt at present, and will soon drop into common dust. You are to watch over them as exposed to many temptations. You are to consider them as the habitation of your souls, and so keep them pure and clean. You are to consider them as the servants and instruments of action, and so give them food, rest, and raiment, that they may be strong and healthful to do the duties of a charitable, useful, and pious life.

Whenever you have less regard to your souls,

or more regard to your bodies, than this comes to;—whenever you are more intent upon adorning your persons, than upon perfecting your souls, you are much more beside yourselves, than he who had rather have a fine coat than a healthy body.

For this reason, my children, I have taught you nothing that was dangerous for you to learn. I have kept you from every thing that might betray you into weakness and folly, or make you think any thing happiness, but the favor of God; or any thing desirable, but to do all the good you can.

Instead of the vain, immodest entertainment of plays and operas, I have taught you to delight in visiting the sick and poor. What music, and dancing, and diversions are to many in the world, prayers and devotions, and psalms are to you. Your hands have not been employed in plaiting the hair, and adorning your persons; but in making clothes for the naked. You have not wasted your fortunes upon yourselves, but have added your labor to them, to do more good to other people. Instead of forced shapes, patched faces, genteel airs, and affected motions, I have taught you to conceal your bodies with modest garments, and let the world have nothing to view of you, but the plainness and sincerity, and humility of all your behavior.

You know, my children, the high privileges belonging to a state of virginity; you know

how it frees from worldly cares and troubles, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancement in a divine life; therefore love, esteem, and honor virginity. But as every one has their proper gift from God, as I look upon you all to be so many great blessings of a married state; so I leave it to your choice, either to do as I have done, or to aspire after perfection in a virgin state of life. I desire nothing, I press nothing upon you, but to make the most of human life, and to aspire after perfection in whatever state of life you choose.

Never, therefore, consider yourselves as persons that are to be seen, admired, and courted; but as poor sinners, that are to save yourselves from the vanities and follies of a miserable world, by humility, devotion, and self-denial. Learn to let nothing in the world be of any value with you, but that which you can turn into a service to God, and a means of your future happiness.

Whether married, therefore, or unmarried, consider yourselves as mothers and sisters, as friends and relations, to all that want your assistance; and never allow yourselves to be idle, while others are in want of any thing that your hands can make for them. Next to reading, meditation and prayer, there is nothing that so secures our hearts from foolish passions, nothing that preserves so holy and wise a frame of mind, as some useful, humble employment of ourselves

Never, therefore, consider your labor as an amusement, that is to rid you of time, and so may be as trifling as you please. Consider it as something that is to be serviceable to yourselves and others, that is to serve some sober ends of life, to save and redeem your time, and make it turn to your account, when the works of all people shall be tried by fire.

When you were little, I left you to little amusements, to please yourselves in any things that were free from harm; but you are now to do nothing as children. Despise every thing that is poor, or vain, and impertinent. Make the labors of your hands suitable to the piety of your hearts, and employ yourselves for the same ends, and with the same spirit, as you watch and pray.

What would you think of the wisdom of him, that should employ his time in making liquors which nobody could use, merely to amuse himself with the variety of their color, when, with less labor and expense, he might relieve those who have nothing to drink. Yet he would be as wisely employed, as those who amuse themselves with such tedious works as they neither need, nor hardly know how to use; when with less labor and expense they might be clothing the naked or visiting the sick.

Be glad therefore to know the wants of the poorest people, and let your hands be employed in making such things for them, as their necessi-

ties require. Nothing can make your own charity more acceptable in the sight of God, than this method of adding your labor to it.

Thus will you be true disciples of your meek Lord and Master, who "came into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and though he was Lord of all, and among creatures of his own making, yet was among them, "as one that serveth."

Live therefore, my children, in humble labor for the good of others; and let ceremonious visits, and vain acquaintances, have as little of your time as possible. Contract no foolish friendships, or vain fondness for particular persons; but love them most, that most turn your love towards God, and your compassion towards all the world. Above all, avoid the conversation of fops and beaux, and hate the idle discourse and compliments of that sort of men. They are the shame of their own sex, and ought to be the abhorrence of yours.

When you go abroad, let humility, modesty, and a decent carriage, be all the state that you take upon you: and let tenderness, compassion, and good nature, be all the fine breeding that you show in any place. If evil speaking, scandal, or backbiting, be the conversation where you happen to be, keep your heart and your tongue to yourself; be as much grieved, as if you was among cursing and swearing, and retire as soon as you can.

Never marry, till you find a man that seeks those perfections, which you labor after yourselves; who is likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live, than to want the benefit of his example and aid.

Love and reverence poor people; as for many reasons, so particularly for this; because our blessed Savior was one of the number, and because you may make them all so many friends and advocates with God for you. Visit and converse with them frequently; you will often find simplicity, innocence, patience, fortitude, and great piety among them; and where they are not so, your good example may amend them.

Rejoice at every opportunity of doing a humble action, and exercising the meekness of your minds; whether it be, as the Scripture expresses it, in washing the saints' feet, that is, in waiting upon, and serving those that are below you; or in bearing with the haughtiness and ill manners of your equals or superiors. For there is nothing better than humility; it is the fruitful soil of all virtues; and every thing that is kind and good, naturally grows from it. Therefore, pray for, and practise humility, and reject every thing in dress, or conversation, that has any appearance of pride.

Strive to do every thing that is praiseworthy, but do nothing in order to be praised; nor think of any reward for all your labors and virtue, till Christ cometh with his holy angels.

Above all, have a care of vain and proud

thoughts of your own virtues. For as soon as ever people live different from the common way of the world, and despise its vanities, the devil represents to their minds the heights of their own perfection; and is content they should excel in good works, provided that he can but make them proud of them. Never allow yourselves to despise those who do not follow your rules of life; but force your hearts to love them, and pray to God for them; and let humility be always whispering into your ears, that you yourselves will fall from those rules to-morrow, if God should leave you to your own strength and wisdom. When, therefore, you have spent days and weeks well, do not suffer your hearts to contemplate any thing as your own, but give all the glory to the goodness of God, who has carried you through such rules of holy living, as you were not able to observe by your own strength; and take care to begin the next day, not as proficients in virtue, that can do great matters, but as poor beginners, that want the daily assistance of God, to save you from the grossest sins.

The spirit of this education speaks so plainly for itself, that nothing need be said in its justification. If we could see it in life, as well as read of it in books, the world would soon find the happy effects of it. A daughter thus educated, would be a blessing to any family that she came into; fit to be the companion of a wise man, and to educate his children. And she that either was

not inclined, or could not dispose of herself well in marriage, would know how to live to great and excellent ends in a state of virginity.

What should a Christian woman be, but a plain, unaffected, modest, humble creature, averse to every thing in her appearance or manners that can draw the eyes of beholders, or gratify the passions of lewd and amorous persons?

How great a stranger must he be to the gospel, who does not know that it requires this to be the spirit of a pious woman? Our blessed Savior says, "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." Need an education which turns women's minds to the arts and ornaments of dress and beauty, be more strongly condemned, than by these words?

How can a woman of piety more justly abhor and avoid any thing, than that which makes her person a temptation to others? If lust and wanton eyes are the death of the soul, can any women think themselves innocent, who in their dress and deportment invite the eye to offend?

As there is no pretence for innocence in such a behavior, so neither can they tell how to set bounds to their guilt. For as they can never know how much, or how often they have occasioned sin in other people, so they can never know how much guilt will be placed to their own account. This, one would think, should sufficiently deter every pious woman from every

Paul's reasoning. Deduction.

thing that might render her the occasion of loose passions in other people.

Paul, speaking of a thing entirely innocent, reasons after this manner: "But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to those that are weak. When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Now if the spirit of Christianity requires us to abstain from things lawful, innocent, and useful, when there is danger of their betraying our weak brethren into an error, surely it cannot be reckoned too nice or needless a point of conscience, for women to avoid such things, as are neither innocent nor useful, but naturally tend to corrupt their own hearts, and raise ill passions in other people.

These considerations will, I hope, instruct you how to form your prayers for it to the best advantage; and teach you the necessity of letting no day pass, without a serious, earnest application to God, for the whole spirit of humility. Fervently beseeching him to fill every part of your soul with it, to make it the ruling, constant habit of your mind, that you may not only feel it, but feel all your other tempers arising from it; that you may have no thoughts, no desires, no designs, but such as are the true fruits of an humble, meek, and lowly heart.

CHAP. XXI.

THE FREQUENCY OF DEVOTION EQUALLY DESIRABLE BY ALL ORDERS OF PEOPLE. UNIVERSAL LOVE.

It will perhaps be thought by some people, that frequent hours of prayer can only be observed by people of great leisure, and ought not to be pressed upon the generality of men, who have the cares of families, trades and employments.

To this it is answered,

1. If a great and exemplary devotion is as much the greatest happiness and perfection of a merchant, a soldier, or a man of quality, as it is the greatest happiness and perfection of the most retired contemplative life, then it is as proper to recommend it, without any abatements, to one order of men as to another. Because happiness and perfection are of the same worth and value to all people.

It is certainly very honest and creditable for people to engage in trades and employments; it is reasonable for gentlemen to manage well their estates and families, and such recreations as are proper to their state. But then every gentleman and tradesman loses the greatest happiness of his creation, and is robbed of something that is greater than all employments, distinctions, and pleasures in the world, if he does not live more to piety and devotion, than to any thing else in the world.

No avocation excuses from frequent devotion.

Here are therefore no excuses made for men of business and figure in the world. It would be to excuse them from that which is the greatest end of living, and be only finding so many reasons for making them less beneficial to themselves, and less serviceable to God and to the world.

2. Merchants and tradesmen, are generally ten times more engaged in business than they need; which is so far from being a reasonable excuse for their want of time for devotion, that it is their crime, and must be censured as a blamable instance of covetousness and ambition.

Unless gentlemen can show that they have another God, than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; another nature, than that which is derived from Adam; another religion, than the Christian, it is vain to plead their state, and dignity, and pleasures, as reasons for not preparing their souls for God, by a strict and regular devotion.

If a merchant having forborne from too great business, that he might quietly attend on the service of God, should therefore die worth twenty, instead of fifty thousand pounds, could any one say that he had mistaken his calling, or gone out of the world a loser?

If a gentleman should have been less frequent at balls, gaming, and merry meetings, because stated parts of his time had been given to retirement, to meditation and devotion, could it be thought, that when he left the world, he would

regret the loss of those hours that he had given to the care and improvement of his soul?

If a tradesman, by aspiring after Christian perfection, and retiring himself often from his business, should, instead of leaving his children fortunes to spend in luxury and idleness, leave them to live by their own honest labor; could it be said, that he had made a wrong use of the world, because he had shown his children, that he had more regard to that which is eternal, than to this which is so soon to be at an end.

Since therefore devotion is the best and most desirable practice of men, as men, and in every state of life; they that desire to be excused from it, because they are men of estates, and business, are no wiser than those that should desire to be excused from health and happiness, because they were men of figure and estates.

I cannot see why every man, should not put these questions seriously to himself: "What is the best thing for me to intend and drive at in all my actions? How shall I do to make the most of human life? What ways shall I wish that I had taken, when I am leaving the world?"

Now to be thus wise, and to make this use of our reason, seems to be but a small and necessary piece of wisdom. For how can we pretend to sense and judgment, if we dare not seriously consider, and answer, and govern our lives by that which such questions require of us?

Any devotion that is not to the greater advan-

tage of him who uses it, than any thing that he can do in the room of it;—any devotion that does not procure an infinitely greater good, than can be got by neglecting it, is freely yielded up; here is no demand of it.

If you are a man of estate, and are to act the part of such a station of human life; you are not called, it is true, as Elijah was, to be a prophet; or as Paul, to be an apostle. But will you not therefore love yourself? Will you not seek and study your own happiness, because you are not called to preach up the same things to other people? You would think it very absurd, for a man not to value his own health, because he was not a physician; or the preservation of his limbs, because he was not a bone setter. Yet it is more absurd for you, to neglect the improvement of your soul in piety, because you are not a preacher.

Consider this text: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if through the spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." This scripture equally relates to all mankind. Can you find any exception here for men of figure and estate?

Again, consider this great doctrine of the apostle: "For none of us, [that is, of Christians,] liveth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord."

Now are you excepted out of the doctrine of this text? Will you leave it to any particular

sort of people, to live and die unto Christ? If so, you must leave it to them, to be redeemed by Christ. For it is the express doctrine of the text, that "for this end Christ died and rose again, that none of us should live to himself." It is not that ministers, or apostles, should live no longer to themselves; but that no Christian, of what state soever, should live unto himself.

If, therefore, there be any rules of devotion, which you can neglect and yet live as truly unto Christ, as if you observed them, this text calls you to no such devotion. But if you forsake such devotion, as you know is expected from some particular sorts of people; such devotion as you know becomes those that live wholly unto Christ, and aspire after great piety; if you neglect devotion, that you may live more to your own temper and taste, more to the fashions and ways of the world, you forsake the terms on which all Christians partake of the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection.

Observe farther, how the same doctrine is taught by Peter; "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

If, therefore, you are one of those who are here called, you see what it is that you are called to. It is not to have so much religion as suits your temper, business, or pleasure; it is not to a particular sort of piety, that may be sufficient for gentlemen; but it is first, to be holy, as he who

hath called you is holy; secondly, it is to be thus holy in all manner of conversation; that is, to carry this degree of holiness into every part of your life.

The reason the apostle immediately gives, why this spirit of holiness must be the common spirit of Christians, as such, is very affecting, and such as equally calls upon all sorts of Christians. "Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, but with the precious blood of Christ," &c.

If, therefore, you consider your gold and silver, and the corruptible things of this life, as any reason why you may neglect a life of strict piety; if you think any thing in the world can be an excuse for your not imitating the holiness of Christ in the whole course and form of your life, you may make yourself as guilty, as if you should neglect the holiness of Christianity for the sake of picking straws. For the greatness of this new life to which we are called in Christ, and the greatness of the price by which we are made capable of this glory, has turned every worldly, temporal, and corruptible thing into an equal littleness; and made it as great baseness and folly, as great a contempt of the blood of Christ, to neglect any degrees of holiness, because you are a man of some estate and quality, as it would be to neglect it, because you had a fancy to pick straws.

Again, the great apostle says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

How poorly, therefore, have you read the Scripture—how little do you know of Christianity, if you can yet talk of your estate and condition, as a pretence for a freer kind of life? Are you any more your own, than he that has no estate or dignity in the world? Must mean people preserve their bodies as temples of the Holy Ghost, by watching, fasting, and prayer; while you may indulge yours in idleness, lusts, and sensuality? How poor and ignorant are such thoughts as these! Yet you must either think thus, or else acknowledge, that the holiness of saints, prophets, and apostles is the holiness that you are to labor after with all the diligence and care that you can.

Again; the apostle says, "You know how we exhorted and charged every one of you, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory."

You perhaps have often heard these words, without thinking how much they required of you. And yet you cannot duly consider them, without perceiving to what an eminent state of holiness they call you. How can the holiness of the Christian life be set before you in higher terms, than when it is represented to you, as

walking worthy of God? Can you think of any abatements of virtue, any neglects of devotion, that are consistent with a life that is to be made worthy of God? Can you suppose that any man walks in this manner, but he that watches over all his steps, and considers how every thing he does, may be done in the spirit of holiness? Yet as high as these expressions carry this holiness, it is here plainly made the necessary holiness of all Christians. For the apostle does not exhort his fellow apostles and saints to this holiness, but commands all Christians to endeavor after it. "We charged," says he, "every one of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory."

Again; Peter says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified in Christ Jesus."

Do you not here plainly perceive your high calling? Is he that speaketh, to have such regard to his words, that he appear to speak as by the direction of God? Is he that giveth, to take care that he so giveth, that what he disposeth of may appear to be a gift that he hath of God? And is all this to be done, that God may be glorified in all things? Must it not then be said, that if any man has nobility, dignity of state, or figure in the world, he must use these as the

gifts of God, for the greater setting forth of his glory? If so, then your estate and dignity is so far from excusing you from great piety, that it lays you under a greater necessity of living more to the glory of God, because you have more gifts that may be made serviceable to it.

I now proceed to consider the nature and necessity of universal love.

Our blessed Lord hath recommended his love to us, as the pattern and example of our love to one another. As therefore he is continually making intercession for us all, so ought we to intercede and pray for one another. "A new commandment," says he, "I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

The newness of this precept did not consist in that men were commanded to love one another; for this was an old precept, both of the law of Moses, and of nature. But it was new in that it was to imitate a till then unheard of example of love; it was to love one another, "as Christ had loved us."

If men are to know that we are disciples of Christ, by our loving one another according to his new example of love; then it is certain, that if we are void of this love, we make it as plainly known unto men, that we are none of his disciples.

The greatness of God. Man's true greatness.

The greatest idea that we can frame of God is when we conceive him to be a being of infinite love and goodness; using an infinite wisdom and power for the common good and happiness of all his creatures. The highest notion therefore that we can form of man is when we conceive him as like to God in this respect as he can be; using all his finite faculties, whether of wisdom, power, or prayers, for the common good of all his fellow creatures; heartily desiring they may have all the happiness they are capable of, and as many benefits from him, as their condition in the world will permit.

And on the other hand, what a baseness is there in all instances of hatred, envy, spite, and ill-will, if we consider, that every instance of them is so far acting in opposition to God, and intending mischief and harm to those creatures, which God favors, and protects, and preserves, in order to their happiness? An ill-natured man among God's creatures, is acting contrary to that love, by which himself subsists, and which alone gives subsistence to all that variety of beings, that enjoy life in any part of the creation. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them."

Now, though this is a doctrine of strict justice, yet it is only an universal love that can comply with it. For as love is the measure of our acting towards ourselves, so we can never act in the same manner towards other people, till we look

upon them with that love with which we look upon ourselves. As we have no degrees of ill-will to ourselves, so we cannot be disposed towards others as we are towards ourselves, till we universally renounce all instances of spite and envy, and ill-will, even in the smallest degrees.

If we had any imperfection in our eyes, that made us see any one thing wrong, for the same reason we should see an hundred things wrong. So if we have any temper of our hearts, that makes us envious, spiteful, or ill-natured towards any one man, the same temper will make us envious, spiteful, and ill-natured towards a great many more. If, therefore, we desire this divine virtue of love, we must exercise and practise our hearts in the love of all, because it is not Christian love, till it is the love of all.

If a man could keep this whole law of love, and yet offend in one point, he would be guilty of all. Acts of love that proceed not from a principle of universal love are but like acts of justice, that proceed from a heart not disposed to universal justice. A love which is not universal, may indeed have tenderness, but it hath nothing of righteousness in it. It is but humor, or interest, or such a love as publicans and heathens practise.

All particular envies and spites, are as plain departures from the spirit of Christianity, as particular acts of injustice. For it is as much a law of Christ, to treat every body as your

neighbor, and to love your neighbor as yourself, as it is a law of Christianity to abstain from theft.

Now the noblest motive to this universal tenderness and affection, is founded in this doctrine: "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." Who would not aspire after this divine temper, which so changes and exalts our nature into an union with him? How should we rejoice in the exercise and practice of this love, which, so often as we feel it, is an assurance to us, that God is in us, and that we act according to his spirit, who is love itself? But we must observe that love has only then this mighty power of uniting us to God, when it is so pure and universal, as to imitate that love which God beareth to all his creatures

God willeth the happiness of all beings, though it is no happiness to himself. Therefore we must desire the happiness of all beings, though no happiness accrue to us from it. God delights in the perfections of all his creatures, therefore we should rejoice in them, and be as glad to have other people perfect as ourselves. As God forgiveth all, and giveth grace to all, so we should forgive all those who injure and affront us, and do them all the good we can.

How silly would it be to envy a man, who was drinking poison out of a golden cup? Yet who can say, that he acts wiser who envies any instance of worldly greatness? How many saints

has adversity sent to heaven? And how many sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery?

She who is envied for her beauty, may perchance owe all her misery to it; and another may be for ever happy for having had no admirers of her person. One man succeeds in every thing, and so loses all: another meets with nothing but crosses and disappointments, and thereby gains more than all the world is worth.

How envied was Alexander, when in conquering the world, he built towns, set up his statues, and left marks of his glory in so many kingdoms! And how despised was the poor preacher Paul, when he was beaten with rods! Yet how strangely was the world mistaken in their judgment! How much to be envied was Paul! How much to be pitied was Alexander!

These reflections sufficiently show, that the different conditions of this life have nothing in them to excite our uneasy passions—nothing that can reasonably interrupt our love and affection to one another.

We proceed now to another motive to this universal love.

Our power of doing external acts of love and goodness is often very narrow and restrained. There are, it may be, but few people to whom we can contribute any worldly relief. But though our outward means of doing good are thus limited, yet if our hearts are full of love and

goodness, we get as it were an infinite power; because God will attribute to us those good works, which we sincerely desired, and would gladly have performed, had they been in our power.

You cannot heal all the sick, or relieve all the poor; you cannot comfort all in distress, nor be a father to all the fatherless. You cannot, it may be, deliver many from their misfortunes, or teach them to find comfort in God. But, if there is a love and tenderness in your heart that delights in these good works, and excites you to do all that you can; if your love has no bounds, but continually wishes and prays for the relief and happiness of all who are in distress, you will be received by God as a benefactor to those, who have had nothing from you but your good will, and tender affections.

You cannot build hospitals nor erect seminaries of education; but if you join in your heart with those who do, and thank God for their pious designs; if you are a friend to these great friends to mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues, you will be received by God as a sharer of such good works; for, though they had none of your hands, they had all your heart.

We may hence learn the great evil and mischief of all wrong turns of mind, of envy, spite, hatred, and ill-will. For if the goodness of our hearts will be accounted as good actions, though we never performed them; it is certain that our envy, ill-nature, and hatred, will bring us under

the guilt of actions that we have never committed. As he that lusteth after a woman shall be reckoned an adulterer, so the ill-natured man who only secretly rejoices at evil, shall be reckoned a murderer. Since, therefore, our hearts, which are always naked, and open to the eyes of God, give such an exceeding extent and increase either to our virtues or vices, it is our best and greatest business to watch, correct, and improve the temper of our souls.

Nothing so much exalts our souls, as this heavenly love. It cleanses and purifies like a holy fire. It makes room for all virtues, and carries them to their greatest height. Every thing good and holy grows out of it, and it becomes a continual source of all holy desires, and pious practices.

By love, I do not mean any natural tenderness, which is more or less in people according to their constitutions; but I mean a principle of reason and piety, which makes us tender, and benevolent to all our fellow creatures, as creatures of God, and for his sake. It is this love that loves all things in God, as his creatures, as the images of his power, as the creatures of his goodness, as parts of his family, as members of his society, that becomes a holy principle of all great and good actions.

Can I think that I love God with all my heart, while I hate that which belongs to God, which has no other master but him, which is part of his

family, and exists only by the continuance of his love towards it? It was the impossibility of this that made John say, "That if any man saith, he loveth God and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

These reasons sufficiently show, that no love is holy or religious, till it becomes universal. If religion has great and necessary reasons why I should live in love and friendship with any one man in the world, they are the same great and necessary reasons why I should live in love and friendship with every man in the world. Consequently I offend against all these reasons, and break through all these ties and obligations, whenever I want love towards any one man. And though people may appear to us ever so sinful, odious, or extravagant in their conduct, instead of regarding them with contempt, we should look upon them with the greater compassion, as being in the most pitiable condition that can be.

As it was the sins of the world, that made the Son of God become a compassionate suffering advocate for all mankind; so none is of the spirit of Christ, but he who has the utmost compassion for sinners. Nor is there any greater sign of your own perfection, than when you find yourself all love and compassion towards those who are very weak and defective. And on the other hand, you have never less reason to be pleased with yourself, than when you find yourself most angry at the behavior of others. All sin is certainly to be hated and abhorred; but then we

must set ourselves against sin, as we do against diseases, by showing ourselves tender, and rendering services to the sick. All other hatred of sin, which does not fill the heart with tender affections towards persons miserable in it, is the servant of sin at the same time that it seems to be hating it.

There is no temper which even good men ought more carefully to watch and guard against than this. For it lurks and hides itself under the cover of many virtues, and by being unsuspected does the more mischief. A man naturally fancies, that it is his own exceeding love of virtue that makes him not able to bear with those that want it.

That the follies, crimes and ill behavior of our fellow creatures, may not lessen that love and tenderness which we are to have for all mankind, we should often consider the reason on which this duty of love is founded. We are to love our neighbors, that is, all mankind, not because they are wise, holy, virtuous, or well-behaved; for all mankind never was, nor never will be so.

Again, we are sure that the merit of persons, is not the reason of our being obliged to love them, because we are commanded to pay the highest instances of love to our worst enemies; we are to love and bless, and pray for those that most injuriously treat us. This therefore is demonstration, that the merit of persons is not the reason on which our obligation to love them is founded.

Let us farther consider, what that love is, which we owe to our neighbor. It is to love him as ourselves; that is, to wish him every thing that we may lawfully wish to ourselves; to be glad of every good, and sorry for every evil that happens to him: and be ready to do him all such acts of kindness, as we are always ready to do ourselves.

Our obligation to love all men in this manner, is founded upon many reasons.

1. Upon equity; for if it is just to love ourselves in this manner, it must be unjust to deny any degree of this love to others, because every man is so exactly of the same nature, and in the same condition as ourselves. If therefore your own crimes and follies do not lessen your obligation to seek your own good, and wish well to yourself; neither do the follies and crimes of your neighbor lessen your obligation to wish and seek the good of your neighbor.

2. This love is founded in the authority of God, who has commanded us to love every man as ourselves.

3. We are required thus to love, in imitation of God's goodness, that we may be children of our Father, which is in Heaven, who willeth the happiness of all his creatures, and maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good.

4. By the command of our Lord and Savior, who has required us to love one another, as he has loved us.

These reasons never vary, or change, they always continue in their full force; and therefore equally oblige us at all times, and in regard to all persons. It appears plainly from what has been said, that the love which we owe to our brethren, is only a love of benevolence, and that this duty of benevolence is founded upon such reasons as never change; such as have no dependence upon the qualities of persons. From hence it follows, that it is the same great sin, to want this love to a bad man, as to want it to a good man. Because he that denies any of this benevolence to a bad man, offends against all the same reasons of love, as he does that denies any benevolence to a good man: And consequently it is the same sin.

You will perhaps say, How is it possible to love a good and a bad man in the same degree? Just as it is possible to be as just to a good as to an evil man. Are you in any difficulty about performing justice and faithfulness to a bad man? Are you in any doubts, whether you need be so just and faithful to him, as you need be to a good man? Why is it, that you are in no doubt about it? Because you know that justice and faithfulness are founded upon reasons that never vary or change, that have no dependence upon the merits of men, but are founded in the nature of things, in the laws of God, and therefore are to be observed with an equal exactness towards good and bad men. Now do but think thus justly

Special esteem. General benevolence.

of charity, that it is founded upon reasons that vary not, that have no dependence upon the merits of men, and you will find it as possible to perform the same exact charity, as the same exact justice to all men, whether good or bad.

You will perhaps farther ask, if you are not to have a particular esteem, veneration, and reverence for good men? It is answered; Yes. But then this high esteem and veneration, is a thing very different from that love of benevolence which we owe to our neighbor.

The high esteem and veneration which you have for a man of eminent piety, is no act of charity to him; it is not of pity and compassion that you so reverence him, but it is rather an act of charity to yourself, that such esteem and veneration may excite you to follow his example. You may, and ought to love, like, and approve the life which the good man leads; but then this is only the loving of virtue, wherever we see it. And we do not love virtue with the love of benevolence as any thing that wants our good wishes, but as something that is our proper good.

The whole of the matter is this. The *actions* which you are to love, esteem, and admire, are the actions of good and pious men; but the *persons* to whom you are to do all the good you can, in all sorts of kindness and compassion, are all persons whether good or bad.

No man is to have a high esteem, or honor, for his own accomplishments, or behavior; yet

every man is to love himself, that is, to wish well to himself; therefore this distinction betwixt love and esteem, is not only plain but very necessary to be observed.

If you think it hardly possible to dislike the actions of men, and yet love them: consider this with relation to yourself. It is very possible, I hope, for you not only to dislike, but to abhor a great many of your own actions. But do you then lose any of those tender sentiments towards yourself, which you used to have? Do you cease to wish well to yourself? Is not the love of yourself as strong then, as at any other time? Now what is thus possible with relation to ourselves, is possible with relation to others. We may have the highest good wishes towards them, and at the same time dislike their way of life.

All that love which we may justly have for ourselves, we are in strict justice obliged to exercise towards all other men; and we offend against the great law of our nature, and the law of God, when our tempers towards others are different from those which we have towards ourselves. Now that self-love which is just and reasonable, keeps us tender, compassionate, and well affected towards ourselves; if therefore you do not feel these kind dispositions towards all other people, you may be assured, that you are not in that state of charity, which is the very life and soul of piety.

You know how it hurts you to be made the

Ridicule may be traced to hatred.

jest and ridicule of other people; how it grieves you to be deprived of the favorable opinion of your neighbors. If therefore you expose others to scorn and contempt in any degree; if it pleases you to see or hear of their infirmities; or if you are loath to conceal their faults, you are so far from loving such people as yourself, that you may be justly supposed to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for yourself. Such tempers are as truly the proper fruits of hatred, as the contrary tempers are the proper fruits of love. And as it is a certain sign that you love yourself, because you are tender of every thing that concerns you; so it is as certain a sign that you hate your neighbor, when you are pleased with any thing that hurts him.

But now, if the want of a true and exact charity be so great a want, that, as Paul says, it renders our greatest virtues but empty sounds, and tinkling cymbals, how highly does it concern us, to study every art, and practise every method of raising our souls to this state of charity?

CHAP. XXII.

OF THE NECESSITY AND BENEFIT OF INTERCESSION.

That intercession is a great and necessary part of Christian devotion, is very evident from Scripture. The first followers of Christ seem to support all their love, and to maintain all their intercourse and correspondence, by mutual prayers for one another.

Paul, whether he writes to churches or particular persons, shows his intercession to be perpetual for them, that they are the constant subject of his prayers. Thus to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." Here we see, not only a continual intercession, but performed with so much gladness as shows that it was an exercise of love, in which he highly rejoiced.

His devotion had also the same care for particular persons, as appears by the following passage. "I thank my God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience, that, without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers, night and day." How holy an acquaintance and friendship was this, how worthy of persons that were raised above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of heaven!

Apostles and great saints did not only thus

benefit and bless particular churches, and private persons; but they themselves also received graces from God by the prayers of others. Thus says Paul to the Corinthians, "You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." This was the ancient friendship of Christians, uniting and cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations, but by the mutual communications of spiritual blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another. And when the same spirit of intercession is again in the world, when Christianity has the same power over the hearts of people, that it then had, this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christians will again be the wonder of the world, for that exceeding love which they bear to one another.

A frequent intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of all mankind, to bless them with his providence, enlighten them with his spirit, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise that the heart of man can be engaged in. Be daily therefore on your knees in a solemn, deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others with some such length, importunity, and earnestness, as you use for yourself; and you will then find ill-natured passions die away, your heart grow great and generous, delighting in the

common happiness of others, as you used only to delight in your own.

He that daily prays to God, that all men may be happy in heaven, takes the likeliest way to make him wish for, and delight in their happiness on earth. And it is hardly possible for you to beseech and entreat God to make any one happy in the highest enjoyments of his glory to all eternity, and yet be troubled to see him enjoy the small gifts of God in this short and low state of human life. When, therefore, you have once habituated your heart to a serious performance of this holy intercession, you have done a great deal to render it incapable of spite and envy, and to make it delight in the happiness of all mankind.

But the greatest benefits of it are received, when it descends to such particular instances as our state and condition in life more particularly require of us. If you change your intercessions according as the needs of your neighbors seem to require; beseeching God to deliver them from such or such particular evils, or to grant them this or that particular blessing; such intercessions, besides the great charity of them, would have a mighty effect upon your own heart, disposing you to every other good office, and to the exercise of every other virtue towards them.

This would make it pleasant to you to be courteous, and condescending to all; and make you unable to say, or do, a hard thing to those,

Effect on ourselves. Ouranius.

for whom you are so kind and compassionate in your prayers. There is nothing that makes us love a man so much, as praying for him; and when you can once do this sincerely for any man, you are prepared for the performance of every thing that is kind towards him.

By considering yourself as an advocate with God for your acquaintance, you would never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself. It would be easy to you to bear with those, for whom you particularly implored the divine mercy.

Such prayers as these, would unite neighbors and acquaintance in the strongest bonds of love. It would ennoble their souls, and teach them to consider one another as members of a spiritual society, created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God.

Ouranius is a pastor, full of the spirit of the gospel, watching, laboring, and praying for a poor country village. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself, and he prays for them, as often as he prays for himself.

He never thinks he can love or do enough for his flock; because he never considers them in any other view, than as so many persons, who by receiving the gifts and graces of God, are to become his joy, and crown of rejoicing. He goes about his parish, and visits every body in it, in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them. He visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice, to discover their

manner of life, and the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them, according to their particular necessities.

When Ouranius first entered into holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt for foolish and unreasonable people. But he has prayed away this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for obstinate sinners; because he is always hoping, that God will hear those prayers which he makes for their repentance.

Thus have his prayers for others been the means of altering and amending the state of his own heart. It would delight you to see with what spirit he converses, with what tenderness he reproves, with what affection he exhorts, and with what vigor he preaches.

At his first coming to this little village, it was disagreeable and tedious to be confined in so retired a place. But now his days are so far from being tedious, or his parish too retired, that he only wants more time to do that variety of good, after which his soul thirsts. The solitude of his little parish is become matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes that God has placed him and his flock there, to make it their way to heaven. He can now not only converse with, but gladly attend and wait upon the poorest people. He is daily watching over the weak and infirm, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people; and is so far from desiring to be considered a gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant

of all. He now thinks the poorest creature in his parish good enough, and great enough, to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices. He is so far from wanting agreeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world, than to be talking with poor and mean people about the kingdom of heaven. All these noble thoughts and divine sentiments are the effects of his great devotion; he presents every one so often before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can esteem, reverence or serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

Ouranius is mightily affected with this passage of holy scripture: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This makes him practise all the arts of holy living, and aspire after every instance of piety and righteousness, that his prayers may have their full force, and avail much with God.

Ouranius reads how God himself said unto Abimelech concerning Abraham, "He is a prophet; he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." And again, how he said of Job: "And my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept." From these passages, Ouranius justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness of life, have power with God; that he grants to other people such pardons, reliefs, and blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety and perfection.

This makes him exceedingly studious of Christian perfection, searching after every grace, and purifying his heart all manner of ways, fearful of every defect in his life, lest his prayers should be less availing with God.

These are the happy effects, which a devout intercession has produced in the life of Ouranius. And if others were to imitate this example, in such a manner as suited their particular state of life, they would find the same happy effects from it. If masters, for instance, were thus to remember their servants, beseeching God to bless them, and suiting their petitions to their particular wants and necessities, the benefit would be as great to themselves, as to their servants. The presenting their servants so often before God, as equally related to God, and entitled to the same expectations of heaven, as themselves, would naturally incline them to treat them, not only with humanity, but with tenderness, care, and generosity. It would make them inclined to every thing good towards their servants; to be watchful of their behavior, and to require of them as exact observance of the duties of Christianity, as of their duties as servants. This would teach them to consider their servants as God's servants, to desire their perfection, and to do nothing before them that might corrupt their minds. This would make them as glad to see their servants eminent in piety as themselves, and contrive that they should have all opportunities, and encour

agements, both to know and perform all the duties of the Christian life. How natural would it be for such a master, to perform every part of family devotion; to have constant prayers; to excuse no one's absence from them; to have the scriptures, and books of piety, often read among his servants; to take all opportunities of instructing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business, as a service of God, and upon the hopes and expectations of another life? How natural would it be for such an one to pity their weakness and ignorance, to bear with the dulness of their understandings, or the perverseness of their tempers; to reprove them with tenderness, and exhort them with affection, as hoping that God would hear his prayers for them?

If gentlemen think it a low employment to exercise such a devotion as this for their servants, let them consider how far they are from the spirit of Christ, who made himself not only an intercessor, but a sacrifice for the whole race of sinful mankind. Let them consider how miserable their greatness would be, if the Son of God should think it as much below him to intercede for them, as they do to pray for their fellow creatures. Let them consider how far they are from that spirit which prays for its most unjust enemies, if they have not kindness enough to pray for those, by whose labors and service they live in ease themselves.

If parents should thus make themselves advocates and intercessors with God for their children, nothing would be more likely, not only to bless their children, but also to form and dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing that was excellent and praiseworthy.

The state of parents is a holy state, in some degree like that of the priesthood, and calls upon them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy Job watched over, and blessed his children, "he sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all."

If parents, therefore, should consider themselves in this light, and daily call upon God in a solemn, deliberate manner, altering and extending their intercessions, as the state and growth of their children required, this would make them circumspect in every thing they said or did, lest their example should hinder that, which they so constantly desired in their prayers. If a father was daily making particular prayers to God, that he would please to inspire his children with true piety, what could be more likely to make the father himself exemplary? How naturally would he grow ashamed of wanting such virtues, as he thought necessary for his children?

If a father thus considered himself as an intercessor with God for his children, to bless them with his prayers, what more likely means to

make him aspire after every degree of holiness, that he might thereby be fitter to obtain blessings from heaven for them? How would such thoughts make him avoid every thing sinful and displeasing to God, lest when he prayed for his children, God should reject his prayers? How fearful would he be of all greedy and unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond of the world, lest he should thereby render them incapable of those graces which he was so often beseeching God to grant them.

If all people, when they feel the first approaches of resentment, envy, or contempt, towards others, should, instead of indulging their minds with low reflections, have recourse to a more particular intercession with God, for such persons as had raised their envy, resentment, or discontent; this would be a certain way to repress uncharitable tempers. When at any time you find in your heart motions of envy towards any person, you should immediately pray God to bless and prosper him in that very thing, which raised your envy. Repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of it, that can possibly be received. This would be such a triumph over yourself, would so humble and reduce your heart to order, that the devil would even be afraid of tempting you again in the same manner, when he saw the temptation

turned into so great a means of amending the state of your heart.

Again; In any little difference or misunderstandings that you happen to have with any one, you should pray for them in a special manner, beseeching God to give them every grace and blessing. You would then think nothing too great to be forgiven; you would stay for no condescensions, and need no mediation of a third person, and such Christian devotion would remove all peevish passions, soften your heart into the most tender condescensions, and be the best arbitrator of all differences.

The greatest resentments among friends and neighbors often arise from poor punctilios, and little mistakes. A certain sign that their friendship is merely human, not founded upon religious considerations, or supported by a course of mutual prayer for one another. For such devotion must either destroy such tempers, or be itself destroyed by them. You cannot possibly have ill temper, or show unkind behavior to a man for whose welfare you are so much concerned as to be his advocate with God in private.

You think it a small matter to ridicule one man, and despise another; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to want that charity towards these people, which Christians are not allowed to want towards their most inveterate enemies. Be but so charitable to these men, as to bless and pray for them, and you will find that

you have charity enough, to make it impossible for you to treat them with any degree of scorn or contempt.

When you ridicule a man, it is with no other end than to make him ridiculous in the eyes of other men. How, therefore, can it be possible for you sincerely to beseech God to honor him with his favor, whom you desire men to treat as worthy of their contempt.

These considerations plainly show the reasonableness and justice of this doctrine of the gospel, "Whoever shall say unto his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council; but whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." We are not to believe that every hasty expression that slips from us, and is contrary to our intention and tempers, is here signified. But "he that says, Racha, or thou art a fool," must chiefly mean him that allows himself in designed acts of contempt towards his brother, and in that temper speaks to him, and of him, in reproachful language. These tempers are at the bottom the most rank uncharitableness, since no one can be guilty of them, but because he has not charity enough to pray to God for his brother.

You would certainly think it a mighty impiety to treat a writing with great contempt, that had been written by the finger of God. And can you think it a less impiety to contemn and vilify a brother, who is not only the workmanship, but the image of God? If you scorn and despise a

brother, you are chargeable with the impiety of despising him, for whom Christ laid down his life.

Though in these words, "whosoever shall say, thou fool," &c. the great sin condemned is an allowed temper of despising a brother; yet we are also to believe, that hasty expressions, and words of contempt, though spoken by surprise or accident, are by this text condemned as sins. They proceed from want of Christian love and meekness, and call for great repentance. They appear to be little sins, only when compared with habits and settled tempers of treating a brother despitefully, and fall as directly under the condemnation of this text, as the grossest habits of uncharitableness.

We are always to apprehend great guilt, and call ourselves to a strict repentance for these hasty expressions; because they seldom are what they seem to be, that is, mere starts of temper, occasioned purely by surprise or accident; but are much more our own proper acts, than we generally imagine.

A man says a great many bitter things; but presently forgives himself, because he supposes it was only the suddenness of the occasion, or something accidental, that carried him far beyond himself. But he should consider, that perhaps the accident, or surprise, was not the occasion of his angry expressions, but might only be the occasion of his angry temper *showing*

itself. As, generally speaking, all haughty, angry language proceeds from some secret habits of pride in the heart; so people who are subject to it, only now and then as accidents happen, have reason to charge themselves with greater guilt than accidental passion, and to bring themselves to such a degree of mortification, as is proper to destroy habits of a haughty spirit.

But to return: intercession is not only the best arbitrator of all differences, the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against all unkind and haughty passions, but is also of great use to discover to us the true state of our own hearts. There are many tempers which we think lawful and innocent, which, if they were to be tried by this devotion, would soon show us how we have deceived ourselves.

Susurrus is a pious, temperate, good man, remarkable for excellent qualities. No one is more constant at the service of the church, or more affected with it. His charity is so great, that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor. Yet Susurrus had a prodigious failing along with these great virtues. He had a mighty inclination to discover the defects and infirmities of all about him. You were welcome to tell him any thing of any body, provided that you did not do it in the style of an enemy. If you would but whisper a thing gently, though it was ever so bad, Susurrus was

ready to receive it. He was always letting you know how tender he was of the reputation of his neighbor: how loath to say that which he is forced to say; and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be concealed.

Susurrus had such a tender, compassionate manner of relating things prejudicial to his neighbor, that he seemed, both to himself and others, to be exercising a Christian charity, at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil speaking temper.

Susurrus once whispered to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad to be spoken of publicly. He ended with saying, how glad he was, that it had not yet took wind, and that he had some hopes it might not be true, though the suspicions were strong. His friend made him this reply: Susurrus, you say, that you are glad it has not yet taken wind: and that you have some hopes it may not prove true. Go home, therefore, to your closet, and pray to God for this man, in such a manner, and with such earnestness as you would pray for yourself on the like occasion. Beseech God to interpose in his favor, to save him from false accusers, and bring all those to shame, who by uncharitable whispers and secret stories, wound him like those that stab in the dark. And when you have made this prayer, then you may, if you please, go tell this secret to some other friend.

Susurrus was exceedingly affected with this

rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conscience in as lively a manner, as if he had seen the books opened at the day of judgment. All other arguments might have been resisted: but it was impossible for him either to reject, or to follow this advice, without being equally self-condemned. From that time, he has constantly used himself to this method of intercession; and he can now no more privately whisper any thing to the prejudice of another, than he can openly pray to God to do people hurt. Whisperings and evil speakings now hurt his ears, like oaths and curses.

I have laid before you, the many and great advantages of intercession. These considerations will, I hope, persuade you to make such intercessions as are proper for your state, a constant part of your daily devotion.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE NATURE AND DUTY OF CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD IN ALL OUR ACTIONS AND DESIGNS.

THERE is nothing wise, or holy, or just, but the great will of God. This is strictly true in the most rigid sense. No beings, therefore, in heaven or earth, can be wise, holy, or just, but so far as they conform to this will of God. The

whole nature of virtue consists in conforming to the will of God, and the whole nature of vice in declining from it. All God's creatures are created to fulfil his will; the sun and moon obey it, by the necessity of their nature: angels conform to it by the perfection of their nature. If, therefore, you would show yourself not to be a rebel and apostate from the order of the creation, it must be the great desire of your soul, that God's will may be done by you on earth, as it is done in heaven. It must be the settled purpose and intention of your heart, to will nothing, design nothing, do nothing, but so far as you have reason to believe, that it is the will of God, that you should so desire, design, and do. You are to consider yourself as a being, that has no other business in the world, but to be that which God requires you to be. To think that you are your own, or at your own disposal, is as absurd as to think that you created, or can preserve yourself.

Resignation to the divine will, signifies a cheerful approbation and thankful acceptance of every thing that comes from God. It is not enough patiently to submit, but we must thank fully receive, and fully approve of every thing, that happens to us. For there is no reason why we should be patient, but what is as good and strong a reason why we should be thankful. If we were under the hands of a wise and good physician, who could not mistake, or do any thing

to us, but what certainly tended to our benefit; it would not be enough to abstain from murmuring against him, but it would be duty to be pleased and thankful for what he did. Now this is our true state with relation to God; we cannot be said so much as to believe in him, unless we believe him to be of infinite wisdom. Every argument, therefore, for patience under his disposal of us, is as strong an argument for approbation of every thing that he does to us.

Whenever therefore you find yourself disposed to uneasiness, or murmuring at any of God's providences over you, you must look upon yourself as denying either his wisdom or goodness. Every complaint necessarily supposes this. This thankful state of heart, is not therefore any high degree of perfection, founded in uncommonly refined notions, but a plain principle, founded in the plain belief, that God is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness.

Now this resignation to the divine will, may be considered in two respects; first, as it signifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence over the world: secondly, as it signifies a thankful acceptance of his particular providence over us. First, every man is by the law of his creation, and by the first article of his creed, obliged to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God, in his general providence. He is to believe that the rise and fall of empires, persecutions, wars, famines, and plagues, are all

permitted, and conducted by God's providence, to the general good of man in this state of trial. A good man is to believe all this, with the same fulness of assent, as he believes that God is in every place, though he neither sees, nor can comprehend the manner of his presence. This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true religious greatness of mind, to be thus affected with God's general providence, admiring, and magnifying his wisdom in all things; never murmuring at the course of the world, or the state of things, but looking upon all around, at heaven and earth, as a pleased spectator; and adoring that invisible hand, which gives laws to all motions, and overrules all events to ends suitable to the highest wisdom and goodness.

It is very common for people to allow themselves great liberty in finding fault with such things, as have only God for their cause. Every one thinks he may justly say, what a wretched, abominable climate he lives in. This man is frequently telling you, what a dismal day it is, and what intolerable seasons we have. Another thinks he has very little to thank God for, that it is hardly worth his while to live in a world so full of changes and revolutions. But these are tempers of great impiety, and show that religion has not yet its seat in the heart of those who have them. It may sound indeed better to murmur at the course of the world, than at Providence: to complain of the weather, than to

complain of God; but if these have no other cause but God, it is a poor distinction to say, that you are only angry at the things, but not at the cause and director of them.

There is nothing more suitable to the piety of a reasonable creature, than thus to admire, and glorify God in all the acts of his general providence: considering the whole world as his particular family, and all events as directed by his wisdom. How can a man be a peevish complainer of any thing that is the effect of Providence, but by showing that his own self-will and self-wisdom are of more weight with him, than the will and wisdom of God?

Secondly, Every man is to consider himself as a particular object of Providence; under the same care and protection of God, as if the world had been made for him alone.

It is not by chance that any man is born at such a time, of such parents, and in such condition. It is as certain, that every soul comes into the body at such time, and in such circumstances, by the express designment of God, as that it is by his express design that some beings are angels, and others men. This we are as certain of from plain revelation, as we can be of any thing. As therefore all that is particular in our state, is the effect of God's providence, and intended both for his glory, and our own happiness, we are, by the greatest obligations of gratitude called upon to conform our will thankfully to the will of God in all these respects.

Had you been any thing else than wnat you are, you had, all things considered, been less wisely provided for than you are; you had wanted some circumstances that are fitted to make you happy yourself, and serviceable to the glory of God. Could you see all that God sees, all that happy chain of causes and motives which are to move and invite you to a right course of life, you would see something to make you like that state you are in, as fitter for you than any other. But as you cannot see this, so it is here that your faith in God, is to exercise itself, and render you as grateful and thankful for the happiness of your state, as if you saw with your own eyes every thing that contributes to it.

Every uneasiness at our state, is founded upon comparing it with that of other people. This is as unreasonable, as if a man in a dropsy should be angry at those that prescribe different things to him, from those which are prescribed to people in health. All the different states of life are like the different states of diseases; what is a remedy to one man in his state, may be poison to another. So that to murmur because you are not as some others are, is as if a man in one disease should murmur that he is not treated like him that is in another. Whereas if he was to have his will, he would be killed by that, which will cure another. If you give yourself up to uneasiness, at any thing in your state, you may, for aught you know, be so ungrateful to God, as

Chance. Sober argument.

to murmur at that very thing, which is adapted to prove the cause of your salvation. Were it in your power to get that which you think it so grievous to want, it might perhaps be that very thing, which of all others would most expose you to eternal damnation.

We are as sure that nothing happens to us by chance, as that the world itself was not made by chance. We are as certain that all things happen and work together for our good, as that God is goodness itself. So that a man has as much reason to will every thing that happens to him, because God wills it, as to think that is wisest, which is directed by Infinite Wisdom. This is not cheating ourselves into any false content, or imaginary happiness. It is a satisfaction grounded upon as great a certainty, as the being and attributes of God. The providence of God is not more concerned in the government of night and day, and the seasons, than in the common events, that seem most to depend upon the mere will of men. So that it is strictly right, to look upon all your worldly accidents and changes to be as truly the effects of Divine Providence, as the rising and setting of the sun.

This holy resignation, and conformity of your will to the will of God, being so much the true state of piety, I hope you will constantly pray for it, especially at your early morning devotions; that your heart may be habitually disposed towards it, and be always ready to look at every

thing as God's, and to consider him in every thing. Thus every thing that befalls you, will be received in the spirit of piety, and made a means of exercising some virtue.

Could we see a miracle from God, how would our thoughts be affected with a holy awe and veneration of his presence! But if we consider every thing as God's doing, either by order or permission, we shall be affected with common things, as they would be who saw a miracle. There is nothing to affect us in a miracle, but as it is the action of God, and bespeaks his presence. So when you consider God as acting in all things, then all things will, like miracles, fill you with awful sentiments of the divine presence.

Now you must not reserve the exercise of this temper, to particular occasions, or fancy how resigned you would be, if such or such trials should happen. This is amusing yourself with the notion of resignation instead of the virtue itself. Do not therefore please yourself with thinking how piously you would submit to God, in a plague, a famine, or persecution; but be intent upon the perfection of the present day. And be assured, that the best way of showing a true zeal, is to make little things the occasions of great piety. Begin therefore in small matters, and ordinary occasions, and accustom your mind to the daily exercise of this pious temper, in the lowest occurrences of life. And when a contempt, an affront, a little injury, loss, or disappointment, or

the smallest events of every day, continually raise your mind to God in proper acts of resignation, then you may justly hope, that you shall be numbered among those that are resigned and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF EXAMINATION. HOW WE ARE TO BE PARTICULAR IN THE CONFESSION OF ALL OUR SINS. HOW WE ARE TO FILL OUR MINDS WITH A JUST HORROR AND DREAD OF ALL SIN.

I NOW come to suggest some considerations in relation to reasons for devotion at the close of the day.

There is the greatest necessity, that all our daily actions be constantly observed, and brought to account, lest by negligence, we load ourselves with the guilt of unrepented sins. The examination therefore of ourselves every evening, is not only to be considered as commendable, but as necessary. Daily repentance is of very little significancy, unless it be a particular confession and repentance of the sins of that day. Examination is necessary to repentance in the same manner as time is necessary; you cannot repent or express your sorrow, unless you allow some time for it: nor can you repent, but so far as you know what it is that you are repenting of. So

that when it is said, that it is necessary to examine and call your actions to account; it is only saying, that it is necessary to know what, and how many things you are to repent of.

You perhaps have used yourself to confess sin in general, and ask forgiveness in the gross, without any particular remembrance, or contrition for the particular sins of that day. And by this practice you are brought to believe, that the same general form of confession is sufficient for every day. Suppose another person should hold that a confession of our sins once every week was sufficient; and that it was as well to confess the sins of seven days altogether, as to have a particular repentance at the end of every day. I know you see the unreasonableness and impiety of this opinion. Yet you cannot bring one argument against such an opinion, but what will be as good an argument against such a daily repentance, as does not call the particular sins of that day to a strict account.

You must tell such a man, that by leaving himself to such a weekly, general confession, he would be in great danger of forgetting many of his sins. Daily confession has no other reason or necessity, but our daily sins; and therefore is not what it should be, but so far as it is repentance and sorrowful acknowledgment of the sins of the day.

You would think yourself chargeable with great impiety, if you were to go to bed without

confessing yourself to be a sinner, and asking pardon of God; you would not think it sufficient that you did so yesterday. Yet if without regard to the present day, you only repeat the same form of words that you used yesterday, the sins of the present may justly be looked upon to have had no repentance. For if the sins of the present day require a new confession, it must be such a new confession as is proper to itself. For it is the state and condition of every day, that is to determine the state and manner of your repentance in the evening; otherwise the same general confession is an empty form.

Let it be supposed, that on a certain day you have told a vain lie upon yourself, ascribing something falsely to yourself through pride; that you have been guilty of detraction, and indulged yourself in some degree of intemperance. Let it be supposed, that on the next day you have lived in a contrary manner, and fell into no particular outbreaking sin; but that on the evening of both these days you use the same general confession, considering it rather as a duty that is to be performed every night, than as a repentance that is to be suited to the particular state of the day. Can it be said, that each day has had its proper repentance?

Again: Suppose that in that day, when you had been guilty of the three notorious sins abovementioned, you had in your evening repentance, called only one of them to mind: is it not plain,

that the other two are unrepented of, and that therefore their guilt still abides upon you? So that you are then in the state of him who retires without repentance for two great sins. Now these are not needless particulars, or scrupulous niceties; but are such plain truths, as essentially concern the very life of piety. For if repentance be necessary, it is necessary that it be rightly performed. I have entered into these particulars only to show in the plainest manner, that examination, and a careful review of all the actions of the day, is not only to be looked upon as a good rule, but as something as necessary as repentance itself.

Again: An evening repentance, which thus brings all the actions of the day to account, is not only necessary because of the guilt of sin, but is also the most certain way to amend our lives. It is only such a repentance as this, that touches the heart, awakens the conscience, and leaves a detestation of sin upon the mind. For instance: if it should happen that upon any particular evening, all that you could charge yourself with should be a negligent performance of your devotions, or time spent in impertinent conversation; if the unreasonableness of these things were fully reflected upon, and acknowledged; if you were to condemn yourself before God for them, and implore his pardon and assisting grace, what could be so likely a means to prevent your falling into the same faults the next day? Or if

you should fall into them the next day, yet if they were again brought to the same examination and condemnation in the presence of God, their happening again would be such a proof to you of your own folly and weakness, as would create pain of heart and care to practice greater circumspection.

On the other hand, a formal, general confession, that overlooks the particular mistakes of the day, and is the same whether the day be spent ill or well, has little or no effect upon the mind. A man may use such a daily confession, and yet go on sinning and confessing all his life, without any true remorse or desire of amendment.

In order to make this examination still further beneficial, every man should oblige himself to some method in it. As every one has something particular in his nature,—stronger inclinations to some vices than to others,—some infirmities that stick closer to him, and are harder to be conquered than others; (and it is as easy for every man to know this of himself, as to know whom he likes or dislikes:) so it is highly necessary, that these particularities should never escape a severe trial at our evening devotion. I say a severe trial, because nothing but rigorous severity is sufficient to conquer them. They are the right eyes, that are to be plucked out and cast from us. As they are the infirmities of nature, so they have the strength of nature, and must be

treated with great opposition, or they will be too strong for us.

He who knows himself subject to anger, must be exact in his examination of this temper every evening. He must find out every slip that he has made of that kind whether in thought, or word, or action; and must reproach, and accuse himself before God, for every thing that is said or done in obedience to passion. If vanity is your prevailing temper, always putting you upon the adornment of your person, and catching compliments, never forget this temper in your evening examination. Confess to God every vanity of thought, or word, or action, that you have been guilty of, and put yourself to shame and confusion for it.

All states and employments of life have their particular dangers and temptations, and expose people more to some sins than others. Every man, therefore, that wishes his own improvement, should make it a part of his evening examination, to consider how he has avoided, or fallen into such sins as are most common to his condition. Our business and condition has great power over us, and nothing but watchfulness, can secure us from those temptations to which it daily exposes us. The poor man is in danger of repining and uneasiness; the rich man is exposed to sensuality and indulgence; the tradesman to lying and unreasonable gains; the scholar to pride and vanity. So that in every state of life, a man

should always have a strict eye upon those faults, to which his state of life most exposes him.

It is reasonable to suppose, that every good man has some method of holy living, and has set himself rules to observe, which are not common to other people, and only known to himself. It should be a constant part of his evening devotions to examine how, and in what degree these have been observed. Now as good rules relating to all these things, are certain means of great improvement, and such as all serious Christians must needs propose to themselves, so they will hardly ever be observed to any purpose, unless they are made the constant subject of our evening examination.

Do not content yourself with a hasty general review of the day, but enter upon it with deliberation. Begin with the first action of the day and proceed step by step, through every particular matter that you have been concerned in, and so let no time, place, or action be overlooked. An examination thus managed, will in a little time make you as different from your present self, as a wise man is different from an idiot.

I proceed now to lay before you such considerations, as may assist to fill your mind with a just dread and horror of all sin. Consider first, how odious sin is to God, what a mighty baseness it is, and how abominable it renders sinners in the sight of God. Sin alone makes the great difference between an angel, and the devil. Every

sinner, so far as he sins, is a friend of the devil, and carrying on his work against God. Sin is a greater blemish and defilement of the soul, than any filth or disease is a defilement of the body. To be content to live in sin, is a much greater baseness, than to desire to wallow in the mire, or love any bodily impurity.

Again; learn what horror you ought to have for the guilt of sin, from the greatness of that atonement which has been made for it. God made the world by the breath of his mouth, but how difficult it is for Infinite Mercy to forgive sins, we learn from that costly atonement, those bloody sacrifices, those pains, sicknesses, and death, which must be undergone, before the guilty sinner is fit to appear in the presence of God.

Ponder these great truths: that the Son of God was forced to become man, to be partaker of all our infirmities: to undergo a poor, painful, miserable, and contemptible life; to be persecuted, hated, and at last nailed to a cross, that by such sufferings he might render God propitious to that nature in which he suffered. That all the bloody sacrifices and atonements of the Jewish law, were to represent the necessity of this great sacrifice, and the great displeasure God bore to sinners. Consider the dreadful marks of God's displeasure at sin; such as famines, plagues, tempests, sickness, diseases, and death.

Consider that this mysterious redemption, all these sacrifices and sufferings, both of God and

man, are only to remove the guilt of sin; and then let this teach you with what tears and contrition, you ought to purge yourself from it.

After this general consideration of the guilt of sin, which has done so much mischief to your nature, and exposed it to so great punishment and made it so odious to God, consider next your own particular share in the guilt of sin. And if you would know with what zeal you ought to repent, consider what repentance and amendment you would expect from him, whom you judged to be the greatest sinner in the world.

You may fairly look upon yourself to be the greatest sinner that you know. For though you may know people guilty of gross sins, with which you cannot charge yourself, yet you may justly condemn yourself as the greatest sinner that you know, for these following reasons.

You know more of the folly of your own heart, than you do of other people's; and can charge yourself with various sins, that you only know of yourself. As you know more of the folly, the baseness, the pride, the deceitfulness and negligence of your own heart, than you do of any one's else, so you have just reason to consider yourself as the greatest sinner that you know.

The greatness of our guilt arises chiefly from the greatness of God's goodness towards us,—from the particular graces and blessings, the favors, the lights, and instructions that we have

received from him. These graces and blessings, and the multitude of God's favors towards us, are the great aggravations of our sins against God; but they are only known to ourselves. Therefore every sinner knows more of the aggravation of his own guilt, than he does of other people's; and consequently may justly look upon himself to be the greatest sinner that he knows.

How good God hath been to other sinners, what light and instruction he has vouchsafed to them; what blessings and graces they have received from him; how often he has touched their hearts with holy inspirations, you cannot tell. But all this you know of yourself; therefore you know greater aggravations of your own guilt, and are able to charge yourself with greater ingratitude than you can charge upon others. And these are the reasons why the saints have in all ages condemned themselves as the greatest sinners, because they knew some aggravations of their own sins, which they could not know of other people's.

The right way to fill your heart with true contrition, is this: You are not to compare the outward course of your life, with that of other people, and then think yourself to be less sinful than they, because that outward course is less sinful than theirs. But you must consider your health, your sickness, your youth or age, your particular calling, the happiness of your education, the degrees of light and instruction that you have received, the good men you have conversed with,

the admonitions you have had, the good books you have read, the numberless multitude of divine blessings, graces, and favors you have received, the good motions of grace you have resisted, the resolutions of amendment you have so often broken, and the checks of conscience you have disregarded. It is from these circumstances, that every one is to measure his guilt. And as you know only these circumstances of your own sins, so you must necessarily know how to charge yourself with higher degrees of guilt, than you can charge upon other people. God Almighty knows greater sinners, it may be, than you are; but your own heart, if it is faithful to you, can discover no guilt so great as your own. You may see sins in other people, that you cannot charge upon yourself; but then you know a number of circumstances of your own guilt, that you cannot lay to their charge. And perhaps that person who appears so odious in your eyes, would have been much better than you are, had he been in your circumstances, and received all the favors and graces from God that you have.

A serious and frequent reflection upon these things, will mightily tend to humble us in our own eyes, and make us very tender in censuring and condemning other people. For who would dare to be severe against other people, when, for aught he can tell, the severity of God may be more due to him, than to them? Whenever, therefore, you are angry at sinners, whenever

you read or think of God's indignation and wrath at wicked men, let this teach you to be the most severe in your censure, and most humble and contrite in the acknowledgment and confession of your own sins, because you know of no sinner equal to yourself.

CHAP. XXV.

CONCLUSION. THE EXCELLENCY AND GREATNESS OF A DEVOUT SPIRIT.

I have now explained the nature of devotion, both as it regards the habits of outward life and the duties of secret retirement. I have only to add a word or two in recommendation of a life thus governed. For though it is as reasonable to suppose it the desire of all Christians to arrive at perfection, as to suppose, that all sick men desire to be restored to health; yet experience shows us, that nothing needs more to be pressed, repeated and forced upon minds, than the plainest rules of Christianity.

But in this polite age, many seem afraid even to be suspected of piety, imagining great devotion to be founded in ignorance and poorness of spirit, and that little, weak, and dejected minds, are generally the greatest proficients in it. But it may be shown, that great devotion is the noblest temper of the greatest and noblest souls;

and that they who think it receives any advantage from ignorance and poorness of spirit, are themselves not a little, but entirely ignorant of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of themselves.

People of fine parts and learning, or of great knowledge in worldly matters, may perhaps think it hard to have their want of devotion charged upon their ignorance and insensibility. But if they will be content to be tried by reason and scripture, it may soon be made to appear. Who reckons it a sign of a little mind, for a man to be full of reverence to his parents, to have the truest love for his friend, or to excel in gratitude to his benefactor? Are not these tempers found in the highest degree in the most exalted and perfect minds? Yet what is high devotion, but the highest exercise of these tempers toward the amiable, glorious parent, friend, and benefactor of all mankind? So long as duty to parents, love to friends, and gratitude to benefactors, are thought great and honorable tempers; devotion, which is nothing else but duty, love, and gratitude to God, must have the highest place among our highest virtues.

If a prince out of his mere goodness should send you a pardon by one of his slaves, would you think it a part of your duty to receive the slave with marks of esteem, and at the same time think it a meanness of spirit, to show esteem and gratitude to the prince who sent you the

pardon? Yet this would be as reasonable, as to suppose that love, esteem, honor, and gratitude, are noble tempers, when they are paid to our fellow creatures: but the effects of a poor, ignorant, dejected mind, when they are paid to God.

That devotion which expresses itself in the sorrowful confession, and penitential tears of a contrite heart, is very far from being a sign of a little mind. Who does not acknowledge it ingenuous and generous, to acknowledge a fault, and ask pardon for the offence? And are not the finest minds, the most remarkable for this excellent temper? Is it not also allowed, that the excellence of a man's spirit is shown when his sorrow and indignation at himself rises in proportion to the folly of his crime, and the goodness and greatness of the person he has offended? Now if things are thus, then the greater any man's mind is, the more he knows of God and himself, the more will he be disposed to prostrate himself before God in all the humblest acts and expressions of repentance. The greater the generosity, judgment, and penetration of his mind is, the more will he exercise and indulge a tender sense of God's just displeasure. The more he knows of the greatness, goodness, and perfection of the divine nature, the fuller of shame and confusion will he be at his own sins and ingratitude. And on the other hand, the more dull and ignorant—the more base and ungenerous any soul is, the more senseless

it is of the goodness and purity of God; and the more averse will it be to humble confession and repentance.

Devotion therefore is so far from being best suited to little ignorant minds, that true elevation of soul, a lively sense of honor, and great knowledge of God and ourselves, are the greatest natural helps that devotion can have.

And on the other hand, it may be made to appear by variety of arguments, that indevotion is founded in excessive ignorance.

1. Our blessed Lord, and his apostles, were eminent instances of great and frequent devotion. Now all must grant that their devotion was founded in a knowledge of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of man. Then it is plain, that those who are insensible of the duty of devotion, neither know God, nor themselves, nor devotion. If knowledge in these three respects, produces great devotion, as in the case of our Savior and his apostles, then neglect of devotion must be chargeable upon ignorance.

2. How comes it that most people have recourse to devotion, when they are in sickness, distress, or fear of death? Is it not because this state shows them more of the want of God, and their own weakness, than they perceive at other times? Is it not because their infirmities, or approaching end, convinces them of something, which they did not half perceive before? Now if devotion at these seasons, is the effect of a

better knowledge of God, and ourselves, then the neglect of devotion at other times, is always owing to ignorance of God and ourselves.

3. As indevotion is ignorance, so it is the most shameful ignorance, and to be charged with the greatest folly. This will fully appear to any one that considers, by what rules we are to judge of the excellency of any knowledge, or the shamefulness of any ignorance. That knowledge which is most suitable to our nature, and which most concerns us to know, is our highest, finest knowledge; and that ignorance which relates to things which are most essential to us, is, of all others, the most gross and shameful ignorance. If there be any things that concern us more than others, he that has the fullest knowledge of these, has the clearest understanding, and the strongest parts. If, therefore, our relation to God, be our greatest relation, if our advancement in his favor be our highest advancement, he that has the highest notions of the excellence of this relation, and most strongly perceives the value of holiness, proves himself to be master of the most excellent knowledge. If a judge had fine skill in painting, architecture, and music, but confused notions of equity, who would scruple to reckon him a poor ignorant judge? But if a judge is to be reckoned ignorant, if he do not perceive the value of justice, then common men are to be looked upon as more or less knowing, according as they know

more or less of those great things, which are the common and greatest concern of all men. If a man should fancy that the moon is no bigger than it appears to the eye, and that it shines with its own light, and if after reading books of astronomy, he should still continue in the same opinion, most people would think he had but a poor apprehension. But if the same person think it better to provide for a short life here, than to provide for a glorious eternity hereafter, that it is better to be rich, than eminent in piety, his ignorance and dulness is too great to be compared to any thing else.

If a man had eyes that could see beyond the stars, or pierce into the heart of the earth, but could not see the things that were before him, or discern any thing that was serviceable to him, we should reckon that he had a very bad sight. If another had ears that received sounds from the moon, but could hear nothing that was done upon earth, we should look upon him to be as bad as deaf. So if a man has a memory that can retain a great many things; if he has a sharp wit, or an imagination that can wander agreeably in fictions, but has a dull apprehension of his duty and relation to God, of the value of piety, or the worth of moral virtue, he may very justly be reckoned to have a bad understanding. He is but like the man that can only see and hear such things as are of no benefit to him. As certain therefore as piety, virtue, and eternal happiness,

are of the most concern to man,—as certain as our immortality and relation to God, are the most glorious circumstances of our nature, so certain is it, that he who dwells most in the contemplation of them, whose heart is most affected with them, who sees farthest into them, who best comprehends the value and excellence of them, who judges all worldly attainments to be mere bubbles and shadows, in comparison of them, proves himself to have, of all others, the finest understanding, and the strongest judgment. If we do not allow this method of reasoning, we have no arguments to prove, that there is any such thing as a wise man, or a fool.

Now if this be undeniable, that we cannot prove a man to be a fool, but by showing that he has no knowledge of things that are good and evil to himself, then it is undeniable, that we cannot prove a man to be wise, but by showing that he has the knowledge of things that are his greatest good, and his greatest evil. If, therefore, God be our greatest good; if there can be no good but in his favor, nor any evil but in departing from him, then it is plain, that he who judges it the best thing he can do to please God, who worships and adores him with all his heart and soul, who had rather have a pious mind than all the dignities in the world, shows himself to be in the highest state of human wisdom.

4. We know how our blessed Lord acted in a human body. It was "his meat and drink to do

the will of his Father who is in heaven." If any number of heavenly spirits were to leave their habitations in the light of God, and be for awhile united to human bodies, they would certainly tend towards God in all their actions, and be as heavenly as they could, in a state of flesh and blood. They would act thus, because they would know that God was the only good of all spirits; and that whether they were in the body or out of the body, in heaven or on earth, they must have every degree of their greatness and happiness from God alone. Thus human spirits, the more exalted they are, the nearer they come to heavenly spirits, the more will they live to God in all their actions. Devotion, therefore, is the greatest sign of a noble genius, it supposes a soul in its highest state of knowledge; and none but little and blinded minds, are destitute of it.

5. To see the dignity of a devout spirit, we need only compare it with other tempers, that are chosen in the room of it. John tells us, that "all in the world, (that is, all the tempers of a worldly life,) is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." What wisdom or excellence is required to qualify a man for these delights? To be given up to the pleasures of the body, can be no sign of a fine mind; for he who has but the sense of an animal, is great enough for these enjoyments. Let us suppose him to be devoted to honor and splendor, and fond of glitter and equipage. Now if this

temper required any great parts, to make a man capable of it, it would prove the world to abound with great parts. Let us suppose him to be in love with riches, and so eager in the pursuit of them, as never to think he has enough. This is so far from showing his great understanding, that blindness and folly are the best supports it hath. Let us, lastly, suppose him not singly devoted to any of these passions, but as it mostly happens, governed by all of them in their turns. Does this show a more exalted nature, than to spend his days in the service of any one of them? To have a taste for these things, and to be devoted to them, is so far from arguing any tolerable parts or understanding, that they are suited to the dullest, weakest minds. If there is an infinitely wise and good Creator, whose providence governs all things in all places, surely it must be the highest act of our understanding to conceive rightly of him. It must be the noblest judgment, the most exalted temper, to worship Him, to conform to his laws, to study his wisdom, and to live and act every where, as in the presence of this infinitely good and wise Creator. A devout man makes a true use of his reason. He sees through the vanity of the world, and discovers the corruption of his nature, and the blindness of his passions. He lives by a law which is not visible to vulgar eyes; he enters into the world of spirits; he sets eternity against time and chooses rather to be for ever great in the

presence of God, when he dies, than to have worldly pleasures while he lives. He is full of great thoughts; he lives upon noble reflections, and conducts himself by rules and principles, which can only be apprehended, admired, and loved by reason. There is nothing therefore, that shows so great a genius, nothing that so plainly declares a heroic mind, as great devotion. When you suppose a man to be a saint, you have raised him as much above all other conditions of life, as a philosopher is above an animal.

6. Lastly, courage and bravery are words of a great sound, and seem to signify a heroic spirit: but humility, which seems to be the lowest part of devotion, is a more certain evidence of a noble and courageous mind. Humility contends with greater enemies, is more constantly engaged, more violently assaulted, bears more, suffers more, and requires greater courage to support itself, than any instances of worldly bravery. A man who dares be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to approve himself to God; who rejects human glory; who opposes the clamor of his passions; who meekly puts up with all injuries and wrongs; and dares stay for his rewards till the invisible hand of God gives to every one their proper places; endures a much greater trial, and exerts a nobler fortitude, than he who is daring in battle. The boldness of a soldier, if he is a stranger to devotion, is rather weakness than fortitude. It is at best but mad

passion and heated spirits, and has no more true valor in it than the fury of a tiger.

Thus we see, that all worldly attainments, whether of greatness, wisdom, or bravery, are but empty sounds; and there is nothing wise or great, or noble, in a human spirit, but rightly to know, and heartily to worship and adore the great God, who is the support and life of all spirits, whether in heaven or on earth.

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